

**Security Council**

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Twenty-sixth semi-annual report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004)

1. The present report is the twenty-sixth semi-annual report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004). It provides a review and an assessment of the implementation of the resolution since my previous report on the subject, which was issued on 28 April 2017 (S/2017/374), and covers developments up to 27 September.

I. Implementation of resolution 1559 (2004)

2. Since the adoption of resolution 1559 (2004) by the Security Council on 2 September 2004, several of its provisions have been implemented, as highlighted in previous reports. However, a number of provisions, including the existence and activities of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias, remain pending. Progress continues to be affected by the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic.

A. Sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence of Lebanon

3. With the adoption of resolution 1559 (2004), the Security Council aimed at strengthening the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence of Lebanon under the sole and exclusive authority of the Government of Lebanon throughout the country, in accordance with the Taif Accords of 1989, to which all the political parties in Lebanon had committed themselves. That objective has remained the priority of my efforts.

4. After several months of discussions on a new electoral law, an agreement on principles was reached among political leaders. A law was passed by Parliament on 16 June 2017, shortly before the expiration of its term on 20 June. The agreed law is a proportional system with preferential voting. The proposal for a gender quota, supported by some political forces, was not retained. As a result of that agreement, the Parliament's term was extended by 11 months until May 2018. On 16 June, the International Support Group for Lebanon in Beirut issued a statement welcoming the agreement as "a further step towards the reactivation of Lebanon's institutions of State and the normalization of Lebanese political life".

5. The Government took some steps during the reporting period to address outstanding governance issues. On 24 May, the Cabinet renewed the term of Central



Bank Governor Riad Salameh for another six-year period. On 20 July, the Cabinet agreed on a substantial number of appointments for key diplomatic positions. On 21 August, the President of Lebanon, Michel Aoun, signed two bills, on salary scale and taxes, respectively. On 24 August, the Cabinet approved a controversial electricity plan during a session chaired by the President. There were no further dialogue sessions between the Future Movement and Hizbullah during the reporting period, but discussions between the two parties continued in the Cabinet on a regular basis.

6. In recent months, the debate among political leaders with regard to the normalization of the country's relations with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has gained prominence, with views falling along traditional political lines. In that context, and further to an invitation by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to some Lebanese ministers to attend the Damascus International Fair, on 9 August the Prime Minister of Lebanon, Saad Hariri, stressed the importance of the country's policy of disassociation and reportedly clarified that any such visits would be made in a personal capacity, in the absence of an endorsement by the Council of Ministers. On 16 and 17 August, the Minister for Industry, Hussein Hajj Hasan, the Minister for Agriculture, Ghazi Zeaiter, and the Minister for Transport and Public Works, Youssef Finianos, attended the Fair. Mr. Hajj Hasan emphasized the official nature of the visit.

7. The number of registered refugees from the Syrian Arab Republic hosted by Lebanon remained at slightly more than 1 million. The Lebanon component of the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan is currently 29 per cent funded, with \$557 million received of a total appeal for just over \$2 billion. On 14 July, the Prime Minister convened the second meeting of a high-level steering committee tasked with addressing tensions between Lebanese and Syrian refugee communities, which also discussed the follow-up from the Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region held in April 2017.

8. In its resolution 1680 (2006), the Security Council strongly encouraged the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to respond positively to the request of the Government of Lebanon to delineate their common border. That remains critical to enabling proper border control and management, including the movement of people and the potential movements of arms. Progress remained difficult to achieve, in part due to the ongoing conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic.

9. The delineation and demarcation of the boundaries of Lebanon remain elements essential to guaranteeing national sovereignty and territorial integrity. While border delineation is a bilateral matter, progress on the issue remains an obligation for Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1680 (2006).

10. Cross-border violations of Lebanese sovereignty and territorial integrity continued on the eastern and northern borders. Between May and July, Syrian military aircraft reportedly conducted 19 airstrikes against militants in the outskirts of Arsal, in an area where the Lebanese-Syrian border is not delineated, causing no casualties. There were reports of three cross-border shooting incidents and six incidents of shelling from the Syrian Arab Republic.

11. In violation of the sovereignty of Lebanon and resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006), Israel continued to occupy the northern part of the village of Ghajar and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line.

12. There was no progress in relation to the issue of the Shab'a Farms area during the reporting period. Furthermore, neither the Syrian Arab Republic nor Israel has responded in regard to the provisional definition of the area contained in my report

on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) issued on 30 October 2007 (S/2007/641).

13. Unmanned aerial vehicles and fixed-wing aircraft, including fighter jets of the Israel Defense Forces, continued to make almost daily overflights of Lebanon during the reporting period, in violation of Lebanese sovereignty and Security Council resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006). In identical letters dated 19 June 2017 addressed to me and the President of the Security Council (A/71/944-S/2017/523), the Permanent Representative of Lebanon stated that "Israel also persists in encroaching on the daily lives, livelihoods and security of Lebanese civilians with surveillance towers and listening devices all along the southern border". In identical letters dated 8 September 2017 addressed to me and the President of the Security Council, the Permanent Representative stated that Israeli warplanes had violated Lebanese airspace the day prior, using Lebanese airspace to strike targets in the Syrian Arab Republic. In identical letters dated 11 September 2017 addressed to me and the President of the Security Council, the Permanent Representative stated that, on 10 September 2017, Israeli warplanes had violated Lebanese airspace, breaking the sound barrier over the city of Sidon, which he said was intended to terrorize peaceable inhabitants of the area.

B. Extension of control of the Government of Lebanon over all Lebanese territory

14. The Lebanese Armed Forces stepped up its efforts to protect the country's stability and extend State authority throughout its territory during the reporting period. However, that endeavour continued to be challenged, as Lebanese citizens, including members of Hizbullah, remained involved in the fighting in the Syrian Arab Republic, and Hizbullah was reported to have conducted military operations on Lebanese territory during the reporting period.

15. Against the backdrop of what he said were "positive developments in Syria close to the Lebanese border", which was now empty of armed militants, the Secretary-General of Hizbullah, Hassan Nasrallah, announced in a public speech on 11 May that Hizbullah was dismantling all its positions on the Lebanese side of the border, as its mission had been accomplished, noting that from now on, the responsibility would be that of the State. He also noted, however, that Hizbullah would remain on the Syrian side of the border, where it would coordinate with the Syrian army to avoid any militant infiltration towards Lebanon.

16. The Lebanese Armed Forces continued to prevent, pre-empt and respond to threats to the country's stability. On 24 April, in an operation involving the use of heavy artillery in the outskirts of Qa' and Ra's Baalbek at the north-east border with the Syrian Arab Republic, the Lebanese Armed Forces reportedly killed or wounded 20 militants from Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Clashes also continued between Hizbullah and other militant groups. On 24 April, Hizbullah forces reportedly destroyed an ISIL field command centre in the outskirts of Ra's Baalbek. On 27 May, clashes between militants from ISIL and Jabhat Fath al-Sham in the outskirts of Aarsal, involving the use of heavy weaponry, reportedly resulted in multiple deaths and injuries among militants. On 11 July, a raid by the Lebanese Armed Forces in Aarsal reportedly resulted in the deaths of two alleged terrorists, the arrest of three others and the confiscation of bombs and other explosives.

17. On 30 June, during what the Lebanese Armed Forces said was a pre-emptive security operation in some of the Syrian refugee settlements in Aarsal, five separate suicide bombings and a hand grenade attack lightly injured seven soldiers. As a result, the Lebanese Armed Forces conducted a vast raid that resulted in the arrest of

356 individuals for interrogation. One Syrian child was reportedly killed in the context of the operation. While in the custody of the Lebanese Armed Forces, four Syrian detainees died. On 4 July, the Directorate of Orientation of the Lebanese Armed Forces stated that the four detainees "suffered from chronic health issues that were aggravated due to the climate condition" and had died before being interrogated. On 5 July, the regional representative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) expressed the Office's deep concern about the death of the four detainees during the investigation process, and called for a transparent, prompt, effective and independent investigation and for accountability, if necessary. OHCHR sent a follow-up letter to the General Prosecutor of Lebanon to that same end. A military investigation reportedly concluded on 24 July that the four individuals had died from health complications. The details of the medical report have not yet been made public. On 26 July, the President stated that "Lebanon takes the necessary measures to prevent torture in all its forms". On 19 September, the Lebanese Parliament passed a law that criminalized torture.

18. On 21 July, Hizbullah reportedly started an operation against Islamist militants from Saraya Ahl al-Sham and from Jabhat Fath al-Sham, a terrorist group listed by the Security Council, in the outskirts of Arsal on the Lebanese side and on the Syrian side of the border. The Syrian Arab Armed Forces reportedly conducted air strikes in the outskirts of Arsal from 7 to 25 July. At the time of the Hizbullah-led operation, the Lebanese Armed Forces also conducted operations that it stated were aimed at preventing the infiltration of militants from the outskirts of Arsal into the town of Arsal or the refugee encampments surrounding it. On 27 July, a ceasefire between Hizbullah and Jabhat Fath al-Sham entered into force. The ceasefire deal involved the departure of Jabhat Fath al-Sham militants and their families to Idlib province in the Syrian Arab Republic. In speeches on 26 July and 4 August, Mr. Nasrallah praised the Syrian army for its collaboration, from the Syrian side, in the battle of Arsal, including in reaching the ceasefire deal. In both speeches, he also stated that Hizbullah was "ready to restore all the territories" that had been liberated to the army.

19. Further to the agreement reached, on 2 August, according to media reports, between 4,500 and 7,500 individuals, including Jabhat Fath al-Sham militants and their families, left for multiple locations across the north-western part of the Syrian Arab Republic, under the supervision of the General Directorate of General Security and the Lebanese army. On the same day, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Lebanon issued a statement confirming that the Office was not part of the agreement underlying the returns and was not involved in the movement. On 14 August, the General Directorate of General Security released a statement confirming "the completion of the departure of gunmen who had occupied parts of the Lebanese territory on the outskirts of Arsal, following negotiations that the Directorate had made with the concerned sides".

20. Ahead of a planned offensive by the Lebanese Armed Forces, the President called a meeting of the Higher Defence Council on 8 August. On 19 August, the Lebanese Armed Forces launched operation "Dawn of the Outskirts" in the vicinity of Ra's Baalbek and Qa'. Shortly thereafter, Hizbullah announced that its combatants, along with the Syrian army, had started implementing an operation to "liberate the outskirts of the Western Qalamun from Daesh terrorists". That same day, the Director of the Orientation Directorate of the Lebanese Army Command stated that the Lebanese Armed Forces was not coordinating with Hizbullah and the Syrian army "either directly or indirectly". On 23 August, during a visit to the operation's military command centre in Ra's Baalbek and Arsal, the Prime Minister stated that the Lebanese Armed Forces was responsible for protecting Lebanese

borders and reaffirmed that there was no coordination between the Armed Forces and the Syrian military.

21. On 22 August, the International Support Group for Lebanon reiterated the Group's strong and unanimous support for the Lebanese Armed Forces as the defender of Lebanon. On 27 August, the Lebanese Armed Forces declared a ceasefire in its operations, with a view to allowing time for negotiations to recover the remains of the nine soldiers from the Lebanese Armed Forces captured in Aarsal in 2014. Shortly thereafter, the Lebanese Armed Forces found the remains of nine bodies, which were later confirmed to be those of the abducted soldiers. On 28 August, as part of a deal negotiated between ISIL and Hizbullah, some 600 militants and their families reportedly departed from Lebanon towards the Syrian Governorate of Dayr al-Zawr. In that connection, the Lebanon General Director of General Security, Abbas Ibrahim, reportedly stated on the same day that "Hizbullah negotiated with the Syrian Government and we were the third party in the negotiations".

22. On 30 August, the President of Lebanon declared the country's "victory over terrorism", while the Commander of the Lebanese Armed Forces, Joseph Aoun, announced that the battle had achieved its objectives, namely the expulsion of ISIL and uncovering the fate of the abducted military servicemen. Over the course of the "Dawn of the Outskirts" operation, seven soldiers from the Lebanese Armed Forces were reportedly killed and a dozen were wounded.

23. As a result of the operation, the Lebanese Armed Forces substantially extended its control over the territory of Lebanon. In a ceremony to honour fallen soldiers on 8 September, the Commander of the Lebanese Armed Forces stated that the army would "deploy from now on all along the eastern borders to defend it". On 22 September, the Lebanese Armed Forces stated that a military contingent had completed its deployment "south of the Litani River, upon the instructions of the army command to reinforce the deployment of the army along the southern border", in accordance with resolution 1701 (2006).

24. Support was sustained to build the capacity of the Lebanese Armed Forces. On 17 May, the Cabinet approved the enlistment of 2,000 recruits. The visit of the Prime Minister to Washington, D.C., on 24 July, included a focus on "Lebanon's interest in maintaining stability" and "strengthening the Lebanese army". In its statement of 22 August, the International Support Group for Lebanon called for continued international support to further strengthen the Lebanese Armed Forces capabilities. I similarly emphasized the importance of reinforcing the Lebanese Armed Forces and called on donors to support Lebanon so it could strengthen its institutions, most notably its army, in a press conference on 13 September.

C. Disbanding and disarmament of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias

25. In its resolution 1559 (2004), the Security Council called for the disbanding and disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias, a key provision of the resolution that has yet to be implemented. The provision reflects and reaffirms a decision to which all Lebanese committed themselves in the Taif Accords. It is critical that the Accords be preserved and implemented by all in order to avoid the spectre of a renewed confrontation among Lebanese citizens and to strengthen the institutions of the State. The Lebanese State should pursue its efforts to achieve a monopoly on the possession of weapons and the use of force throughout its territory.

26. Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias within the country continued to operate outside the control of the Government, in violation of resolution 1559 (2004). While several groups across the political spectrum in Lebanon possess weapons outside

Government control, Hizbullah is the most heavily armed militia in the country. In a democratic State, it remains a fundamental anomaly that a political party maintains a militia that has no accountability to the democratic, governmental institutions of the State and that has the power to take that State to war without any oversight. The maintenance of arms and alleged increase in arsenals by Hizbullah and other groups pose a serious challenge to the State's ability to exercise full sovereignty and authority over its territory. In addition, several Palestinian armed groups continued to operate in the country, inside and outside the Palestine refugee camps.

27. There has been no tangible progress towards the disbanding and disarming of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias, as called for in the Taif Accords and resolution 1559 (2004). Since the adoption of that resolution, no specific steps have been taken to tackle that crucial issue, which lies at the heart of the sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon. The maintenance by Hizbullah of a military arsenal outside of a legal framework and its involvement in the Syrian Arab Republic continued to be denounced by a number of voices in Lebanon, who consider those issues to be destabilizing factors in the country and ones that undermine democracy. Many Lebanese see the continued presence of such arms as an implicit threat for use within Lebanon for political reasons.

28. During the reporting period, Hizbullah reportedly was involved in negotiating and securing a number of other agreements involving the return of combatants and a number of refugees to areas in the Syrian Arab Republic. On 10 June, according to a statement by the Lebanese army, "more than 50 Syrian refugee families" left Aarsal for the town of Assal al-Ward in the Syrian Arab Republic, "accompanied by Lebanese army units until the last military checkpoint on the outskirts of Aarsal". That was allegedly part of an agreement brokered by Hizbullah with some Syrian armed opposition groups. On 12 July, another agreement that had allegedly been reached between Hizbullah and such groups was reported to have resulted in the return of 106 individuals from Aarsal to Assal al-Ward. While a number of refugees joined those movements to the Syrian Arab Republic, which were aimed at the evacuation of militants, the underlying agreements were not civilian-driven and should not set the standard for future refugee return movements. The United Nations was not involved in the return process.

29. Mutual accusations of violations of resolution 1701 (2006), some of which would also be a violation of resolution 1559 (2004), continued. As referenced in my latest report on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) (S/2017/591), the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations alleged in identical letters dated 20 June 2017 addressed to me and the President of the Security Council (S/2017/526) that Hizbullah had "established observation posts near the Blue Line" under the guise of an agricultural non-governmental organization. Referencing that letter, the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Lebanon stated, in identical letters dated 9 August 2017 addressed to me and the President of the Security Council (A/71/1031-S/2017/705), that the claims by Israel provided the clearest evidence of Israeli spying activities, in blatant contradiction to resolution 1701 (2006). The Chargé d'affaires a.i. also stated that the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) had "confirmed that this association is involved in forestry activity", and alleged that the Israeli allegations were "part of the efforts of Israel to divert international attention from its repeated violations of Lebanese sovereignty".

30. On 21 July, Kuwait reportedly sent a letter of protest to the Lebanese Government regarding the verdict issued in Kuwait in 2015 regarding the alleged involvement of Hizbullah in training Kuwaiti individuals to carry out acts harmful to the security of Kuwait (the so-called Abdali cell), a claim which was denied by

Hizbullah. During his visit to Kuwait on 13 August, the Prime Minister of Lebanon condemned the Abdali cell and stated his country's readiness to cooperate.

31. The Prime Minister reiterated the commitment of Lebanon to the disassociation policy during the reporting period. However, the participation of Hizbullah and other Lebanese groups in the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic continued to run counter to that policy. Furthermore, in a speech on 23 June, the Secretary-General of Hizbullah stated that, in the event of a new conflict with Israel, the door would open for tens of thousands of mujahidin from the Arab and Muslim worlds to be partners in the battle, and would come from Afghanistan, Iraq, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Pakistan, Yemen and many other places.

32. In the Palestinian refugee camp of Ein el-Helweh, there was continued tension and intermittent armed clashes during the reporting period, including in relation to renewed attempts at deploying the joint Palestinian security forces in all parts of the camp to contribute to the security of the camp. On 3 and 4 June, attempts by the joint force to deploy to Tiri neighbourhood, considered to be a stronghold of extremist militant Bilal Badr, triggered clashes between the force and members of the Islamist militant groups, resulting in the injury of two individuals. On 1 July, Hamas and Asbat al-Ansar, both members of the joint force, handed over to the Lebanese authorities an individual wanted for allegedly plotting terror attacks during Ramadan in Beirut and Sidon. On 17 August, an attack by extremist militants against an office of the joint force triggered a series of clashes between the force, mainly under the lead of Fatah, and extremist militants, including Bilal Abu Arqub, an ally of Bilal Badr. The clashes reportedly resulted in 8 individuals dead, with 86 others injured and an estimated 500 persons displaced, in addition to substantial material damage in the Tiri sector of the camp. A ceasefire was reached on 23 August. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) had to temporarily suspend its operations as a result of the clashes. Stray bullets also reached areas in Sidon in the vicinity of the camp. Steps were taken by the local Palestinian and Lebanese leadership in Sidon to address the round of violence, including the establishment of a security committee in the Sidon area.

33. On 24 April, clashes erupted in the Beddawi Palestine refugee camp, as the main Palestinian factions launched an operation to arrest a number of fugitives wanted by the Lebanese Armed Forces for drug trafficking and the illicit use of weapons. The next day, four suspects were handed over to the Lebanese Armed Forces, resulting in further clashes, forcing UNRWA to suspend its operations for one day. On and around 26 June, clashes occurred in Ein el-Helweh and Shatila camps, reportedly leaving 2 people dead in Shatila and a total of 10 people injured in both camps, as a result of a series of violent disputes.

34. The presence of Palestinian armed groups outside the camps also continued. Notwithstanding the decision taken in 2006 by the National Dialogue, and confirmed in subsequent sessions, to disarm Palestinian militias outside the camps within a six-month period, no progress was made during the reporting period with regard to dismantling the military bases of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command and Fatah al-Intifada in the country.

35. On 20 July, the Lebanese Working Group on Palestinian Refugees Affairs launched, under the aegis of the Lebanese Palestinian Dialogue Committee, a document entitled "A unified Lebanese vision for the Palestinian refugees affairs in Lebanon". The document reiterates decisions taken at the National Dialogue Conference of 2006, providing for "disarming Palestinians outside the camps within a six-month period and addressing the issue of weapons inside the camps" and calls for the Government to "re-evolve the decisions of the National Dialogue Conference".

II. Observations

36. I welcome the continuous progress made by the Government on a number of key reform agendas, notably the landmark Lebanese-brokered agreement on a new electoral law, after years of failed attempts to reach a consensus. The agreement will pave the way for a renewed representation of Lebanese citizens through their elected officials. With a view to maintaining the momentum of the restoration of all Lebanese institutions to their full functionality, it will be important to hold free and fair parliamentary elections on time.

37. I hope that the same constructive spirit can be applied to a resumption of discussions on a number of outstanding issues, including the National Defence Strategy, within the framework of the National Dialogue under the leadership of the President, as a key element of progress towards addressing the issue of the presence of weapons outside the control of the State.

38. I commend the successes of the Lebanese Armed Forces against the threat of terrorism. The takeover by the Lebanese Armed Forces of areas formerly under the control of extremist elements in Ra's Baalbek and Qa' is an achievement in the restoration of the State authority and of its control over its territory. I am saddened by the deaths of the nine soldiers that had been detained by ISIL since August 2014. I am similarly saddened by the deaths of soldiers over the course of the recent operation by the Lebanese Armed Forces and the injuries to a number of others, to whom I wish a speedy recovery. The political and popular backing behind that operation shows that the Lebanese Armed Forces continue to benefit from a high level of support across the political spectrum.

39. Those successes also demonstrate the tangible impact of international efforts in building the capacity of the Lebanese Armed Forces and in increasing its capabilities. In that context, I welcome the sustained support provided by some Member States to the Lebanese Armed Forces. I renew my call to donors, made on 13 September, to support the Lebanese Armed Forces, including under the umbrella of the International Support Group for Lebanon, to maintain or increase their contributions or to become new contributors to the Lebanese Armed Forces. The continued commitment by Lebanon to relevant resolutions and to the guiding principles of its partnership with the international community, including the respect of international law in the conduct of military operations, is of major importance.

40. The reassertion by Lebanon of its control over some of the border posts previously manned by Hizbullah is an important step forward in the restoration by Lebanon of its authority over all its territory. Progress towards the eventual presence of the Lebanese Armed Forces along the entirety of the country's border with the Syrian Arab Republic will further that goal. In that context, and to extend the authority of the Lebanese State over its territory, political efforts to revisit the outstanding issue of the delineation and the demarcation of the border with the Syrian Arab Republic should be made, at the appropriate time, in accordance with resolution 1680 (2006). That would allow consideration to be given to new ways to ensure better control of the borders of Lebanon and to prevent the illegal transfer of weapons and movement of fighters in both directions.

41. The widespread proliferation of weapons outside the control of the State, combined with the existence of heavily armed militias, undermines the security of Lebanese citizens. The maintenance by Hizbullah of sizeable and sophisticated military capabilities outside the control of the Government of Lebanon remains a matter of grave concern. Through its operation in Aarsal, Hizbullah aimed to portray itself as a provider of security against external and internal threats, a role that should be the monopoly of the State. I reiterate my calls upon all concerned to

contribute to efforts to reinforce the institutions of the Lebanese State. I also reiterate my call upon Hizbullah and all other parties concerned not to engage in any military activity inside or outside Lebanon, consistent with the requirements of the Taif Accords and resolution 1559 (2004). I continue to urge the Government and armed forces of Lebanon to take all measures necessary to prohibit Hizbullah and other armed groups from acquiring weapons and building paramilitary capacity outside the authority of the State, in violation of resolution 1559 (2004).

42. The participation of Hizbullah and other Lebanese groups in the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic is a breach of the policy of disassociation and the principles of the Baabda Declaration. It presents considerable risks to the stability of Lebanon and challenges to its sovereignty. The involvement of Hizbullah in the Syrian Arab Republic for several years is contrary to resolution 1559 (2004) and demonstrates the failure of Hizbullah to disarm and its refusal to be accountable to the State institutions that the implementation of resolution 1559 (2004) was intended to strengthen.

43. I continue to be concerned by the reported involvement of Hizbullah elsewhere, as well as that of other Lebanese elements in fighting in the region, which poses risks to the stability of Lebanon and of the region. Such activities challenge the prospect of the full implementation of resolution 1559 (2004). I call anew upon Hizbullah to step back from its involvement in the Syrian Arab Republic. I also call upon countries in the region that maintain close ties with Hizbullah to encourage the transformation of the armed group into a solely civilian political party and its disarmament, in accordance with the requirements of the Taif Accords and resolution 1559 (2004), in the best interests of Lebanon and regional peace and security.

44. The situation in some of the Palestine refugee camps remains of concern, including as it affects the regular delivery of the essential health, education, relief and social services provided by UNRWA to Palestine refugees in a challenging environment. I call on donors to continue supporting the Agency in the delivery of those services. Such efforts are without prejudice to the eventual resolution of the Palestine refugee question in the context of a comprehensive settlement in the region.

45. In Ein el-Helweh, it is of concern that violence is recurrent, and that ceasefire agreements could not be sustained. It is important that the joint security forces, as the entity in charge of security in the camp, have the support of all factions to work towards the shared goal of stability. Continuous tensions between the joint forces and extremist armed elements demonstrate the persistent risks resulting from the maintenance of unauthorized weapons outside the control of the State authority. In that regard, I encourage the Government of Lebanon to take forward the pledge of its ministerial statement of 27 December 2016 to promote the Lebanese-Palestinian dialogue to avert tensions in the camps. Particular attention should be given in that regard to the Ein el-Helweh camp. I renew my call on the Government to implement the decisions of the National Dialogue in 2006 pertaining to the disarmament of Palestinian militias, as called for by the document entitled, "A unified Lebanese vision for the Palestinian refugees affairs in Lebanon".

46. I condemn all violations of the sovereignty of Lebanon. I reiterate my call to Israel to adhere to its obligations under relevant Security Council resolutions and to withdraw its forces from the northern part of the village of Ghajar and an adjacent area north of the Blue Line, and to cease immediately its overflights of Lebanese airspace, which are violations of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon, undermine the credibility of the Lebanese security services and generate anxiety among the civilian population. I continue to call upon all parties, including the

Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Lebanon and to prevent cross-border violations.

47. Lebanon successfully restored control over parts of its territory that had been used to prepare and launch terrorist actions against the country, and so addressed some of the impacts on its security emanating from the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic. The political, economic and humanitarian effects of the crisis on Lebanon, however, remain tangible. I call upon donors to support Lebanon in its response to the crisis, and to respond to the needs of refugees and host communities in particular, as they are essential for the stabilization and development of Lebanon.

48. Lebanon faces a combined opportunity of political momentum, greater security and nationwide support for its army. It is important that this opportunity be seized in order to move forward on the implementation of the outstanding provisions of resolution 1559 (2004). I therefore count on the continued commitment of the Government of Lebanon to its international obligations and call upon all parties and actors to fully abide by resolutions 1559 (2004), 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006). The United Nations will continue its efforts towards the full implementation of those and all other resolutions pertaining to Lebanon.



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Letter dated 16 October 2017 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith information bulletins from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic for the period 11-13 October 2017 (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) V. Nebenzia



Annex to the letter dated 16 October 2017 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (11 October 2017)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported eight incidents of gunfire in the following governorates: three in Dar'a, two in Damascus, two in Homs and one in Aleppo.

The Turkish representative office has reported one violation in Idlib Governorate.

Most of the incidents of small arms being fired indiscriminately have been reported in areas controlled by fighters of the terrorist groups Nusra Front and Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours, the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has carried out two humanitarian operations: the delivery of 2.9 tons of food parcels to the local population of Rasm Abbud in Aleppo Governorate; and the delivery of 2 tons of food parcels to the local population of Salamiyah in Hama Governorate.

In total, 1,642 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,226.2 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to 217 residents.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 59,277 residents.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

Over the past 24 hours, no ceasefire agreements have been signed.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is unchanged — it is still 2,248.

Negotiations on joining the ceasefire regime have continued with armed opposition groups in Aleppo, Damascus, Hama, Homs and Qunaytirah Governorates.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (12 October 2017)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported five incidents of gunfire: four in Aleppo Governorate and one in Damascus Governorate.

The Turkish representative office has reported one violation in Damascus Governorate.

Most of the incidents of small arms being fired indiscriminately have been reported in areas controlled by fighters of the terrorist groups Nusrah Front and ISIL.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours, the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has carried out one humanitarian operation in Mu'addamiyat al-Shaykh in Damascus Governorate, delivering food products with a total weight of 2.2 tons.

In total, 1,643 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,228.4 tons.

The United Nations has carried out one humanitarian operation: food and household supplies with a total weight of 112 tons were delivered to Tayyibah.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to 159 residents.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 59,436 residents.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

Over the past 24 hours, one ceasefire agreement has been signed with Za'farana in Homs Governorate.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process has increased to 2,249.

Negotiations on joining the ceasefire regime have continued with armed opposition groups in Aleppo, Damascus, Hama, Homs and Qunaytirah Governorates.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (13 October 2017)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported seven incidents of gunfire in the following governorates: three in Qunaytirah, two in Suwayda', one in Damascus and one in Dar'a.

The Turkish representative office has reported three violations in Damascus Governorate.

Most of the incidents of small arms being fired indiscriminately have been reported in areas controlled by fighters of the terrorist groups Nusra Front and ISIL.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours, the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has carried out two humanitarian operations: the delivery of 1.6 tons to the local population of Dayr al-Fardis in Hama Governorate; and the delivery of 2.9 tons of food products to the local population of Umm Zulaylah in Aleppo Governorate.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo was 4.5 tons.

In total, 1,645 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,232.9 tons.

In the course of humanitarian operations carried out over the past 24 hours, Russian military paramedics have provided medical assistance to 307 people.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 59,743 residents.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

Over the past 24 hours, no ceasefire agreements have been signed.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is unchanged — it is still 2,249.

Negotiations on joining the ceasefire regime have continued with armed opposition groups in Aleppo, Damascus, Hama, Homs and Qunaytirah Governorates.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

**Security Council**

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Report of the Secretary-General on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel**I. Introduction**

1. By its resolution 2359 (2017) of 21 June 2017, the Security Council welcomed the deployment of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel throughout the territories of its contributing countries, with a view to restoring peace and security in the Sahel region.¹ The Council also welcomed its strategic concept of operations, which was endorsed by the Peace and Security Council of the African Union at its 679th meeting, held on 13 April 2017.

2. The Security Council requested me to report on the activities of the Joint Force, including on its operationalization, challenges encountered and possible measures for further consideration, as well as on ways to mitigate any adverse impact of its military operations on civilians, including women and children, within four months of the adoption of the resolution. To that end, between 6 and 14 September, I deployed an assessment team to States members of G-5 Sahel. The team comprised staff from the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations, Field Support and Political Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS). Its findings have informed the drafting of the present report, prepared in close collaboration with the States members of G-5 Sahel and the African Union.

II. Challenges facing the Sahel

3. The security situation in the Sahel deteriorated significantly following the Libya crisis of 2011, the Mali crisis of 2012 and the insurgency led by Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'Awati Wal-Jihad, commonly known as Boko Haram, which exacerbated pre-existing vulnerabilities. In its report of January 2012 on the impact of the Libyan crisis on the Sahel region (S/2012/42), the assessment mission dispatched by my predecessor outlined how governance shortfalls, poverty and the devastating impact of climate change, including successive droughts and food insecurity, had already resulted in serious humanitarian emergencies. Local conflicts

¹ The Sahel region goes beyond the territory of the States members of the Group of Five for the Sahel and comprises also Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, the Niger, Nigeria and Senegal.



over access to natural resources, exacerbated by the continuous marginalization of parts of the population, threaten livelihoods and aggravate living conditions. While the majority of these challenges pre-date the Libyan conflict, the resulting mass displacement of people, increase in migration and influx of weapons and armed combatants from northern Libya further exacerbated the already precarious situation in the Sahel. The subsequent crisis in Mali in 2012 resulted in the complete erosion of State authority in the northern and central parts of the country and provided a safe haven for violent extremist groups with ties to Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and groups in Libya, which subsequently expanded into Burkina Faso and the Niger. In such a context, Governments are unable to sustain the delivery of social services, including access to education and health care, while ensuring the safety and security of their population.

4. Countries of the Sahel have repeatedly called for the creation of a regional military capacity to respond to threats more effectively, showcasing a collective determination to enhance regional ownership. In November 2015, the Heads of State of the G-5 Sahel countries decided to create a joint force to combat terrorism and transnational criminal networks. This was followed by high-level consultations in 2016 and 2017, including with the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). During the African Union summit held in January 2017, the Heads of State of the G-5 Sahel countries informed me of their decision to formally establish a joint force, which they subsequently announced during their sixth ordinary summit, held in Bamako on 6 February. On that occasion, I pledged my support for this commendable initiative and promised to address the many challenges facing the Sahel holistically. Important as it is, the Joint Force initiative, in order to be successful and sustainable, should dovetail into a comprehensive package, bringing together the security, humanitarian and development aspects. The United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel, which was endorsed by the Security Council in 2013, provides a framework for United Nations support for such a response. To speed up its implementation, earlier in 2017, I assigned the Deputy Secretary-General the task of mobilizing the entire system to support the region through an Executive Committee working group on the Sahel, comprising the heads of United Nations offices, agencies, funds and programmes.

5. Terrorist attacks in Bamako, Niamey and Ouagadougou between 2015 and 2017, as well as continuous attacks on defence and security forces in the tri-border area between Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger and frequent deadly attacks on United Nations peacekeepers, are reminders of a deteriorating situation that carries serious risks of spillover effects on regional and international peace and security if not addressed rapidly. These attacks have further strengthened the political resolve and shared sense of urgency to render the Joint Force operational as swiftly as possible and to launch its first joint border operations in the Liptako-Gourma region before the end of 2017.

Governance

6. Weak political, financial and security governance remain at the core of instability in the Sahel. The limited presence of national institutions in remote and border areas has further disenfranchised parts of the population and actively fuelled the rapid growth of violent extremism across the region, contributing to the creation of contested and ungoverned spaces. Socioeconomic exclusion and deprivation, poverty and underdevelopment create grievances that have been exploited by violent extremist groups. Consequently, such groups have encroached on areas in which the State is largely absent, such as in northern and central Mali, but also increasingly in northern Burkina Faso, specifically targeting State civilian, security or military officials and institutions. The presence of those groups has further undermined

access to basic services and resulted in the closure of schools and health-care centres, further eroding State authority. In some cases, extremist groups have formed alternatives to governance and exploited existing tensions between herders and pastoralists, as well as between ethnic groups, perpetuating the risk of armed violence. In other cases, they enjoy the support of disenfranchised citizens, having established parallel administrations, including taxation systems in return for protection and the provision of essential basic services, including justice services.

Border protection and migration

7. The past five years have seen a dramatic increase in mass displacements and irregular migration across the Sahel. As at the time of reporting, some 4.9 million people had been forcibly displaced, demonstrating the toll of the conflict and violence in the region. Most of the displaced have lost their livelihoods and are often being hosted in already highly vulnerable communities. Migrants transit through all G-5 Sahel countries, although the vast majority cross the Niger and, to a lesser extent, Mali. The facilitation of irregular migration has become a major source of income for the population of parts of northern Mali and the northern Niger and has led to an increase in criminal activity based on smuggling of and trafficking in persons. This state of affairs highlights the need for a shared vision and a joint approach to improving border security and to better control with respect to the movement of persons and goods in West Africa, beyond the States members of G-5 Sahel.

8. The members of the assessment team found that the level and sophistication of border protection varied greatly across the region. While Chad and Mauritania had invested significantly in border security, Mali and the Niger had been calling upon the international community for support since 2011, owing to their limited capacity to ensure effective border control and to contain the influx of weapons and fighters from Libya. The team found that little progress had been made in that domain and that State presence in border areas in northern Burkina Faso and northern and central Mali had, in fact, decreased.

Security

9. Following the Libyan crisis, large quantities of weapons and ammunition from Libyan stockpiles were smuggled into the Sahel region. In addition, the Sahelo-Saharan region has long been an area where illicit trafficking has thrived, with Mali, Mauritania and the Niger at the centre of trading routes. The recent increase in drug trafficking, combined with an increase in smuggling of and trafficking in persons, has provided new sources of income for terrorist armed groups, in some cases with the complicity of government officials, and has further destabilized the region. Consequently, and as a result of widespread neglect, equipment and training shortfalls and a lack of adequate accountability and oversight, security forces are unwilling or ill-equipped to respond to such threats.

10. Consequently, G-5 Sahel countries have progressively augmented their security spending, as evidenced by an ever-increasing share of their national budgets being devoted to security and defence expenditures. This has been true in particular for countries confronted with multiple security threats. Chad and the Niger, for example, face simultaneous crises on their borders with Libya on the one hand and the Boko Haram insurgency in the south on the other. Chad also has had to contend with the deterioration of security along its borders with the Sudan and the Central African Republic, and the Niger has faced similar issues along its border with Mali. Mauritania significantly invested in national security after suffering several terrorist attacks in the early 2000s. Interlocutors in Chad and Mauritania reported that they had to prioritize defence spending over development initiatives.

Officials in the Niger also noted that threats were rapidly evolving, requiring dynamic responses.

Development

11. The socioeconomic situation in the Sahel, a region with economies that are poorly diversified and highly dependent on agriculture, pastoralism and the exploitation of mineral resources, is marked by a rapidly growing youth population, worsening inequalities, including in the provision of basic social services, and an uneven distribution of resources. Poor financial governance and an increased reliance on imports, resulting in high exposure to fluctuations in the price of raw materials, have directly affected national revenues and aggravated dependencies on foreign assistance. These trends have been further exacerbated by environmental degradation and the rampant effects of climate change, which have also had an adverse impact on agricultural output and rural development.

Humanitarian impact

12. Currently, some 24 million people are in need of life-saving assistance in the Sahel region. Humanitarian actors have increasingly had to step in to provide basic social services to vulnerable and marginalized communities, filling the void left by the erosion of State authority. As a result, the sheer size of the Sahelo-Saharan region, which features some of the highest demographic rates in Africa combined with a deteriorating security situation, represents a significant challenge for humanitarian access to the affected population, as the magnitude and multitude of issues to be addressed far exceed existing humanitarian capacities. The capacity of humanitarian actors to respond to needs is further hampered by the lack of available funding. As at the time of reporting, only 49 per cent of the total \$2.7 billion required for humanitarian assistance in 2017 in the region had been received.

13. The region is now trapped in a vicious cycle in which poor political and security governance, combined with chronic poverty and the effects of climate change, has contributed to the spread of insecurity. The rise of terrorism and lawlessness has further undermined State authority, leaving Governments unable to provide for or protect their citizens, which, in turn, has contributed to radicalization and further instability.

14. In order to support the region in addressing the root causes of instability beyond a military response, I have reoriented the United Nations system to streamline and enhance its support through the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel, developed in 2013. As at the time of reporting, the Executive Committee working group on the Sahel had already agreed to a clear division of labour among United Nations entities in the region, had initiated a mapping exercise of ongoing programmes by the United Nations and other actors in order to identify gaps and was developing an investment strategy for mobilizing resources.

15. In addition to the United Nations, other international and regional organizations have developed comprehensive regional strategic frameworks. Those organizations include the European Union (2012), the World Bank (2013), ECOWAS (2013), the African Union (2014) and the G-5 Sahel (2014).

III. Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel

A. Strategic concept of operations

16. Pursuant to the summit of the Heads of State of G-5 Sahel of 6 February 2017, the G-5 Sahel Defence and Security Committee developed a strategic concept of operations, which was endorsed by the Peace and Security Council of the African Union at its 679th meeting, as reflected in its communiqué of 13 April 2017. The Peace and Security Council authorized the immediate deployment of up to 5,000 military, police and civilian personnel for a renewable 12-month period, with the aim of restoring peace in the Sahel. The States members of G-5 Sahel also developed the command architecture for the Joint Force, a memorandum of understanding on extraterritoriality and a budget estimate of €423 million for the first year of operations. In his letter to me dated 27 April 2017, transmitting the concept of operations and the communiqué of the Peace and Security Council, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, stressed that the Peace and Security Council had urged the Security Council to adopt a resolution approving the deployment of the Joint Force and authorizing me to identify modalities of support for the Joint Force, including through MINUSMA and within the strategic partnership for collaboration that links the United Nations and the African Union. I conveyed this strategic document to the Security Council for further consideration in my letter dated 15 May, resulting in the adoption of resolution 2359 (2017), in which the Council welcomed the establishment of the Joint Force.

17. In the concept of operations, reference is made to the deteriorating political, security, humanitarian and socioeconomic situation in the Sahel, underlining the adverse impact of the spread of terrorism on both the lives of its population and the State presence, as it undermines Governments' abilities to provide basic social services, exacerbates existing humanitarian crises and obstructs development. Consequently, the Joint Force is given the mandate to (a) combat terrorism and transnational organized crime; (b) contribute to the restoration of State authority and the return of refugees and internally displaced persons; (c) facilitate humanitarian operations; and (d) contribute to development activities in the Sahel.

18. The strategic concept of operations delineates a two-phased approach to addressing security challenges in the Sahel, with an immediate focus, in phase 1, on border security in three strategic sectors: (a) along the borders of Mali and Mauritania (Sector West); (b) in the Liptako-Gourma region along the borders of Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger (Central Sector); and (c) along the border between Chad and the Niger (Sector East). In phase 2, the Joint Force should be able to conduct centralized operations in one or more locations in G-5 Sahel territory.

19. The assessment team considered that joint border operations under phase 1 would prioritize the Central Sector in the immediate term, with the aim of neutralizing terrorist armed groups; preventing trafficking in persons, drugs and arms; monitoring movements of weapons, ammunition and explosives; and, consequently, disrupting supply chains and cutting these groups off from their sources of funding. Officials in States members of G-5 Sahel further informed the assessment team that such operations would consist of joint and coordinated patrols by armed forces of the contributing countries, on their own territories on each side of their respective borders. Sectors extend 50 km into each country on both sides of the border, although Chad and the Niger have decided to increase this to 100 km to both sides of their joint border in Sector East. The MINUSMA Force Commander recommended applying that decision to the Central Sector and Sector West as well. In its communiqué issued following its meeting held in Sévaré, Mali, on

14 September, the Defence and Security Committee endorsed the decision. The Joint Force exercises unified command through its headquarters in Sévaré, its three sector headquarters in Wour, Chad, in Nbeiket el Ahouach, Mauritania and in Niamey, and its seven cross-sectoral battalion command posts.

20. The Joint Force would be able to pursue terrorist elements into the territory of a neighbouring country, beyond the 50 km delineating each sector, but would be required to notify and seek approval from the Joint Force Commander in advance. The modalities for hot pursuit are further specified in the memorandum of understanding on extraterritoriality.

21. The assessment team was informed by regional stakeholders that phase 1 would build on 16 joint border operations that had been conducted by States members of G-5 Sahel over the past two years with the support of French forces. Those operations will continue to complement the ongoing operations and activities carried out by MINUSMA, the European Union Training Mission, the European Union capacity-building mission in Mali and the French-led Operation Barkhane. In northern and central Mali, joint border operations will contribute to an enabling environment for MINUSMA to focus on its core mandated tasks in support of the Malian peace process. That will require effective and systematic coordination mechanisms and exchanges of information. Going forward, the quarterly quadripartite meetings between MINUSMA, the European Union Training Mission, Operation Barkhane and the Malian defence and security forces will engage the participation of the leadership of the Joint Force and provide a forum for coordination and information-sharing.

22. Phase 2 would envisage the deployment of a full-fledged force operating throughout the Sahel to neutralize terrorist armed groups and criminal organizations. However, the strategic concept of operations does not provide details on the scale and scope, the command and control structure or the prerogatives of such a force. The timing for the transition to phase 2 has also not been specified. Discussions with interlocutors in the capitals of the States members of G-5 Sahel revealed that conceptions of phase 2 varied significantly by country. Notably, Chad and the Niger advocated a phased approach whereby phase 2 would not begin until phase 1 had been completed, borders secured and a State presence, in particular through the return of security forces, restored. Officials in Chad also noted that the Joint Force was often perceived as an additional effort being made to respond to the Malian crisis. They highlighted the seriousness of threats facing Chad and its neighbours that were entirely disconnected from Mali and stressed the need to address those threats simultaneously. For officials of Burkina Faso and Mali, the launch of phase 1 did not preclude planning for phase 2. Meanwhile, interlocutors in Mauritania advocated making phases 1 and 2 operational concurrently, expressing reservations with regard to rendering the Joint Force further operational under phase 1, pending the adoption of a more solid mandate under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations and the provision of adequate financial and other means. Officials of the Niger echoed those sentiments and called upon the international community to step up its support for the Joint Force. Interlocutors in all five countries noted that the strategic concept of operations was a "living document" that would be subject to further revision to reflect ongoing discussions on the end-state of the Joint Force and the means to attain it, as well as the gradual establishment of a regional force.

23. The strategic concept of operations focuses on military operations and provides few details on its non-military capacities. The assessment team learned that the police component of the Joint Force was expected to comprise 105 provost police elements, who would be embedded within the seven battalions and be responsible for judicial police missions and for combating transnational organized crime and trafficking in persons. At the present stage, the concept of operations does

not further specify the level of coordination and collaboration between the police officers and the military elements and operations envisaged under phase 1 or phase 2. In particular, detailed guidelines for law enforcement concomitant to military operations, including all legal procedures concerning detainees, investigations and prosecutions, as well as possible extraditions, would have to be clearly defined in advance, based on the memorandum of understanding on extraterritoriality. Courts, judges and facilities would also need to be identified and be provided with sufficient means to function in synergy with operations on the ground. The lack of documentation, including a database of individuals sought under national jurisdictions, will also have to be addressed as a priority. That will also require fostering judicial cooperation between countries in the subregion, while ensuring the safe, secure and humane management of detainees.

B. Operationalization of the Joint Force

24. Since the endorsement of the strategic concept of operations by the Peace and Security Council of the African Union in April, G-5 Sahel countries, with the support of their partners, have taken major steps to render the Joint Force operational. In addition to the development of its normative framework, G-5 Sahel has accelerated its efforts to establish the central command and headquarters of the Joint Force in Sévaré, as well as the headquarters for the Central Sector in Niamey. General Didier Dacko of Mali was appointed Joint Force Commander in June and has since deployed to Sévaré, as have staff officers from Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger.

25. During its visits to G-5 Sahel capitals, as well as to Sévaré, the assessment team not only witnessed the progress made, but also observed the levels of preparedness across the three sectors and five countries. Buildings and structures in Sévaré and Niamey had been refurbished, reinforced and equipped with computers and communication systems. The Joint Force headquarters in Sévaré, inaugurated by the President of Mali, Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, on 9 September, has already attained initial operational capability. The refurbishment of the command post for the Central Sector in Niamey is also progressing swiftly and is expected to be completed in October 2017. The establishment of command posts for Sector East in Wour and Sector West in Nbeiket el Ahouach, however, has not yet begun. With the exception of Mauritania, all the G-5 Sahel countries have identified their required battalions. Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger have also begun to mobilize troops and equipment within their means. Nevertheless, equipment shortfalls are hampering and delaying the deployment of troops. Chad and Mauritania have yet to identify and deploy the staff officers whom they intend to contribute to the central command.

26. Between 27 September and 3 October, an operational planning group met regularly to draft the operational orders for the first border operation of the Joint Force in the Central Sector at the end of October. Through its force and sector headquarters, the Joint Force provides the framework for developing a more comprehensive and long-term strategy over the ad hoc joint operations that had been carried out to date. The Joint Force has the potential to promote additional ownership and capacity-building by the armed forces of G-5 Sahel countries for addressing national and regional security matters more effectively. Currently, the armed forces of the G-5 Sahel countries rely heavily on their partnership with Operation Barkhane, which comprises 4,000 military personnel deployed in the Sahel. Since August 2014, more than 5,300 military personnel from G-5 Sahel have taken part in 250 joint operational instructions with Operation Barkhane. Additional support would be required to allow the G-5 Sahel countries to reach full operational capacity.

C. Challenges and risks encountered

Political framework

27. The advancement and consolidation of the Joint Force need to be paired with deeper reflection on development and stabilization, as well as with the restoration of State authority and good governance. Coherent approaches that avoid shifting security threats to areas that do not benefit from similar engagement and support also need to be developed. To that end, and to ensure complementarity with development initiatives, a sound institutional architecture into which the Joint Force would be embedded needs to be further developed. Currently, of the decision-making bodies described in the annex on command architecture to the strategic concept of operations, none is equipped to play this role. The assessment team found that officials in all G-5 Sahel countries concurred with that analysis but expressed concern that the development of an institutional framework might result in additional layers of bureaucracy and consequently hamper the Joint Force's capacity to respond to threats swiftly.

28. While the assessment team determined that the question of offensive operations in phase 2 still required further discussion, as the strategic concept of operations did not provide sufficient clarity, the positions of the G-5 Sahel countries on the matter vary significantly. The establishment of a full-fledged regional counter-terrorism force would have legal implications, including with respect to the question of mandate, support options and the protection of civilians and human rights. In addition, if the G-5 Sahel countries decide to aim to make phase 2 fully operational, a joint vision and a shared definition of the scale and scope of such a force, as well as its end state, would be required. Equipping a regional force to conduct counter-terrorism operations would also require adequate financial and logistical support, including for equipment, operational coordination and intelligence-sharing processes, as well as an efficient communication system and a solid human rights compliance framework.

29. Ensuring interoperability, cooperation and effective coordination among the Joint Force, MINUSMA and national and international armed forces will also remain a challenge going forward. In that regard, existing mechanisms, such as the quarterly quadripartite meetings in Mali and the deployment of liaison officers from MINUSMA and Operation Barkhane to the Joint Force's headquarters, will facilitate information-sharing and planning, thereby contributing to an enabling environment for MINUSMA and facilitating operational deconfliction.

Human rights, humanitarian and protection-related concerns

30. The proposed counter-terrorism operations of the Joint Force present significant risks and challenges in relation to human rights and international humanitarian law. In central Mali, terrorist armed groups are often firmly entrenched within the population and, in some cases, have taken on State functions. In such a complex setting, military operations that do not fully respect the human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces might not only adversely harm civilians and result in human rights violations, but also risk contributing to further destabilization, including fuelling youth radicalization. Officials in G-5 Sahel countries have acknowledged the necessity for mechanisms to prevent and address human rights violations as well as for integrating a civilian dimension into the planning and conduct of Joint Force operations. However, existing compliance frameworks at the national level often remain limited to training. They lack adequate predeployment mechanisms (screening, robust training and protection of civilians planning) and post-deployment

accountability mechanisms. The absence of a satisfactory human rights compliance framework for the Joint Force compounds the risk of human rights violations being committed during its operations.

31. Nevertheless, counter-terrorism operations would be more likely to harm civilians and result in violations of international human rights and humanitarian law in the absence of United Nations support. They therefore warrant its engagement through the establishment of a robust compliance framework under the human rights due diligence policy. While the need to protect civilians and safeguard humanitarian assistance and human rights is recognized in the strategic concept of operations, there is little information on how such protection could be planned and implemented, nor on the composition and role of the envisaged civilian component of the Joint Force. Lastly, the incorporation of gender perspectives and issues pertaining to the protection of women and children in all aspects of the strategic concept of operations, as recognized in resolution 2359 (2017), including the likelihood that the Joint Force could encounter children associated with armed groups and the requirement for a clear procedure for handing them over to child protection actors, would also need to be ensured.

Equipment gaps and financing

32. While significant steps have been taken towards making phase 1 operational, significant challenges remain. The Sector East headquarters in Wour and Sector West headquarters in Nbeiket el Ahouach are in remote and isolated areas. These facilities and the battalion-level command posts will require significant investments for their construction and to render them fully operational, protected and secure. Currently, such investments are feasible only through bilateral partners. Those locations will also need to be sustained with a supply chain, which will require both force and convoy protection. Once established, however, the garrisons would serve as outposts and could significantly enhance the Joint Force's surveillance and manoeuvre capabilities and provide an important tactical advantage with regard to monitoring the area and controlling trafficking routes.

33. The equipment shortfalls of the States members of G-5 Sahel, combined with their limited capacity to mobilize assets, hamper their ability to prepare the Joint Force and render it operational. Significant equipment and capability gaps remain unaddressed. The G-5 Sahel countries have identified the following key needs that require additional bilateral or multilateral support: (a) setting up the remaining sector headquarters and command posts; (b) equipment for a light mechanized company in each of the seven battalions; (c) intelligence and reconnaissance capabilities, including unmanned aerial systems, and relevant training; (d) interoperable information and communications infrastructure to support command and control, linking the Joint Force headquarters with the sector headquarters and command posts; (e) force protection; (f) counter-improvised explosive device measures, including material and training of specialists; (g) individual personal protective equipment, ballistic vests and helmets; (h) night-vision devices; (i) air and ground transportation; and (j) medical and casualty evacuation capacity.

34. The States members of G-5 Sahel have developed a €423 million budget estimate for establishing the Joint Force and rendering it operational, including its first year of operations. As at the time of reporting, only a few partners had come forward, and only one quarter of the budget had been funded. Given its size and the high potential future costs associated with eventually making a full-fledged anti-terrorism force operational, mobilizing sustainable and consistent financial support over several years will remain a significant challenge. The lack of an overarching institutional framework also presents challenges with regard to the Joint Force's capacity to channel and disburse donor contributions. The development of a

sound financial mechanism to receive and oversee the disbursing of contributions received would be instrumental in gaining donor confidence and encouraging more partners to come forward.

IV. Support already mobilized and measures for further consideration

35. Under resolution 2359 (2017), States members of G-5 Sahel have the responsibility to provide the Joint Force with adequate resources and are urged to continue their efforts towards rendering it sustainable, viable and effectively operational. During the extraordinary summit of the Heads of State of the G-5 Sahel countries, held in Bamako on 2 July, member States pledged a contribution of €10 million each to the budget of the Joint Force, for a total of €50 million, while the European Union committed itself to contributing €50 million and France €8 million, which included equipment. Combined, those pledges amount to €108 million, or roughly a quarter of the budget estimate. Mali and the Niger have utilized parts of their respective pledges to equip and refurbish the Joint Force headquarters in Sévaré and the sector headquarters in Niamey.

36. Bilateral partners have also provided significant support. France and Germany announced a joint initiative in support of the Joint Force in April 2017 and have since co-hosted two planning meetings, in Paris in June and in Berlin in September, to mobilize additional support by States members of the European Union and to coordinate contributions so as to avoid duplication and encourage complementarities. The Franco-German initiative includes support for the sector headquarters in Niamey as well as the provision of air assets and training to the armed forces of Mauritania and the Niger. Apart from the continued efforts of Operation Barkhane since 2014, French bilateral support is focused on the Central Sector and includes vehicles, ammunition, ballistics, protection, a communications system, medical support and optics. Germany is providing support for mobility, ambulances and protection equipment.

37. During the planning meeting in support of the Joint Force, held in Berlin on 19 September and co-chaired by France and Germany, several States members of the European Union, namely, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Luxembourg and Portugal, also pledged training support. Other European countries also expressed interest in providing support and are currently finalizing the scope of their commitments, with an expectation that pledges could be announced at the donor conference to be held in Brussels in December. At the conclusion of the meeting in Berlin, the Co-Chairs recommended handing over information-sharing and clearing house tasks to the European Union by the end of 2017, so that support for the Sahel from the European Union and its member States could be properly aligned with needs, further showcasing the need for an institutional framework, the coordination of donor support and oversight of spending.

38. The provision of bilateral support to the national armed forces and security services of G-5 Sahel countries will remain critical. While the creation of an integrated regional force remains the objective, its becoming operational and its effectiveness are dependent upon the capacity of each national contingent and the level of interoperability that they can attain. As levels of preparedness and recruitment vary significantly between States members of G-5 Sahel, bilateral partners and multilateral organizations such as the European Union are the best positioned to support those countries directly, given the capabilities of those partners and organizations to equip the Joint Force and render it operational, while targeting support to fill considerable shortfalls. They also have the advantage of

being able to provide major equipment and military-pattern equipment, including armour, weapons, munitions and related systems, as well as maintenance for such equipment and troop self-sustainment. European Union financial support to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) under the African Peace Facility is an example of a support mechanism used to cover costs such as troop allowances, international and local staff salaries, compensation for death and disability, and peace support operations. The European Union could also enhance its support to the Joint Force through its Common Security and Defence Policy regional initiative and provide mobile advisory and training teams at the Joint Force's headquarters in Sévaré, through the European Union Training Mission, pending a revision of its mandate.

39. Pending the establishment of a financial architecture and disbursement mechanisms for the Joint Force, the European Union has opted for a contractor to oversee the disbursement of its €50 million donation. To that end, on 14 September, the G-5 Sahel Defence and Security Committee signed an agreement that will follow a demand-driven approach and that places the responsibility for submitting and coordinating requests with the Joint Force's chief of staff.

40. A donor conference to mobilize additional pledges and support for the Joint Force, and for the development-oriented Alliance for the Sahel initiative, created in July 2017 by France and Germany, will be held in Brussels in December. The decision by the European Union to disburse its initial pledge through a contractor and to establish a clearing house by the end of 2017 should accelerate the mobilization and disbursement of additional pledges from States members of the European Union and its institutions. The establishment of a sound financing mechanism and a financial architecture would provide the transparency and accountability necessary to encourage additional contributions.

41. Interlocutors from States members of G-5 Sahel have repeatedly expressed their full commitment to the African Union Peace and Security Architecture and their intention to establish the Joint Force within its framework. In return, the African Union has supported regional initiatives to collectively address emerging security threats, for example through the creation of the Nouakchott Process on the enhancement of security cooperation and the operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture in the Sahelo-Saharan region and through assessment missions for the establishment of a regional force. The African Union was invited to participate in planning sessions on rendering the Joint Force operational, held in Bamako in early October. In order to determine the role that the African Union would play in support of the Joint Force, the African Union Commission also deployed an assessment team to Mali from 1 to 7 October.

42. The robust counter-terrorism posture envisaged for the Joint Force under phase 2 of the strategic concept of operations would present additional support challenges to the Joint Force and its partners, including the United Nations should it assume a support role (see sect. V below). As the Joint Force transforms itself from its initial posture in the proximity of the borders of the States members of G-5 Sahel into one with the capability to deploy jointly in its contiguous territory, its support requirements will change and subsequent assessments would need to be conducted. The Joint Force will therefore need to develop an integral capacity to self-support highly mobile operations, including aerial support, evacuation capacity, communications and forward logistics, adapted to the terrain and to its operations. If the Joint Force is expected to remain a long-term presence in the region, an exit strategy should be defined for the phasing out of multilateral and bilateral support.

V. Options for United Nations support

43. In the subsequent paragraphs, I outline four options for United Nations support to the Joint Force to make phase 1 of the strategic concept of operations fully operational. Those options range from using the existing mandate of MINUSMA to support the Malian defence and security forces within the framework of the Malian peace process, to an expanded MINUSMA mandate, to the establishment of a dedicated United Nations support office to deliver a logistics and soft support package on a limited scope. The most ambitious option would expand the scope of the dedicated United Nations support office.

44. Regardless of the development and implementation of such options, the United Nations already has the mandate to provide soft support, including ensuring complementarity and better coordination between ongoing military efforts and the Joint Force, through the deployment of liaison officers and technical experts to the Joint Force and the permanent secretariat of G-5 Sahel in Nouakchott.

45. An enhanced United Nations role in supporting the Joint Force would imply a strategic and technical partnership, including a role in planning, coordination, reporting and oversight structures. Dedicated staff and resources, commensurate with the level of support provided, would be required for the management of such a role, which would encompass engagement with the Joint Force on accountability processes, performance management, environmental protection, audits and other compliance frameworks.

A. Security Council-mandated United Nations support package

46. The Security Council has previously approved logistical support packages for non-United Nations missions such as the African Union Mission in the Sudan and AMISOM. As outlined in my report on options for authorization and support for African Union peace support operations (S/2017/454), different types of mission support services determined and authorized by the Council can be delivered by the United Nations to non-United Nations missions through assessed contributions. Specifically, pursuant to Council resolution 2320 (2016), the Secretariat identified four models through which the United Nations can use assessed contributions to support African Union peace support operations. Building on those models, I propose two options for providing more enhanced support to the Joint Force. Both options would require the establishment of a dedicated United Nations support office that would be financed from assessed contributions, in a manner similar to the support provided to AMISOM. As with the AMISOM support package, reimbursement mechanisms, including salaries and stipends, should not be assumed to be component of the support package.

47. Under the most comprehensive option, if so mandated by the Security Council, a dedicated United Nations support office could initially provide a package that would include the following support: aeromedical evacuation capacity and related medical support; life-support services, including rations, fuel and water adapted to the requirements of the Joint Force; consumables, including field defence stores, first aid kits, tactical tentage, accommodation materiel and medical supplies; technical support to apply and implement compliance frameworks, including the human rights due diligence policy; capacity for managing its environmental footprint; maintenance contracts, geospatial, telecommunications and information technology and infrastructure support; and other types of support provided to the Joint Force and its troops.

48. The scope of the support package would eventually be extended to the three sectors, as the implementation of phase 1 of the strategic concept of operations proceeds, including Sector East and its planned 1,300 troops (two additional infantry battalions and the Sector East headquarters in Wour), to cover all elements of the 5,000-strong force. In that case, the area of operations of the support office would be defined as covering the entire territory of the G-5 Sahel countries.

B. Security Council-mandated logistical and soft support package

49. A less ambitious but still significant option could be considered, particularly in view of the phasing of the Joint Force's operations. If approved by the Security Council, a United Nations logistical support package could initially provide or augment the following limited support in the Central and West Sectors: aeromedical evacuation capacity and related medical support; life-support services, including rations, fuel and water adapted to the requirements of the Joint Force; consumables, including field defence stores, first aid kits, tactical tentage, accommodation materiel and medical supplies; technical support to apply and implement compliance frameworks, including the human rights due diligence policy; and capacity for managing its environmental footprint.

50. Geographically, such dedicated United Nations support would be best limited to the Central and West Sectors (estimated 3,700 troops, including the Joint Force headquarters in Sévaré). Bilateral partners could focus their role on initial support for Sector East, where the United Nations has no proximate presence.

51. While voluntary contributions to the Joint Force and its contingents are most efficiently provided bilaterally, a separate United Nations-managed trust fund could be used to target and complement the requirements of the Joint Force in other areas of United Nations competence, such as counter-improvised explosive device capabilities and sourcing of United Nations-pattern (civilian, non-lethal) equipment from existing United Nations systems contracts and strategic deployment stocks.

C. Support requiring an adjustment to the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali

52. Pursuant to resolution 2359 (2017), the United Nations is authorized to support the Joint Force through the provision of technical advice and assistance with planning and support in the areas of human rights compliance and training. The exchange of liaison officers and the provision of relevant intelligence to support coordination between MINUSMA and the States members of G-5 Sahel are also specifically requested in the resolution. In addition, pursuant to resolution 2364 (2017), MINUSMA, within its area of operations, supports the Malian defence and security forces, as described below.

53. With additional resources, this support could be extended to include, within the Mission's area of operations, administrative personnel movements by air, logistical convoys and escorts overland; the use of United Nations engineering plant equipment and uniformed MINUSMA engineering enabling units to assist in the preparation of Joint Force locations; emergency vehicle recovery and counter-improvised explosive device support within MINUSMA main supply and patrol routes; and access to bulk water at MINUSMA water collection points. These provisions, as well as access to the Mission's medical and aeromedical capacities and technical support to apply and implement relevant compliance frameworks,

would be included in a technical agreement with the Joint Force. Given the Mission's presence and supply chain in Mali, such support could be mobilized quickly.

54. MINUSMA could extend targeted support to elements of the Joint Force, including non-Malian armed forces, operating in the Central Sector and Sector West within the MINUSMA area of operations, especially in the Malian part of the Joint Force's Central Sector, as well as to the Joint Force headquarters in Sévaré. The Mission could then support the two Malian infantry battalions to be deployed in the West and Central Sectors, the Malian support company deployed with the Joint Force's headquarters in Sévaré, and the battalions of Burkina Faso, Mauritania and the Niger, should they operate on Malian territory. Targeted MINUSMA support to the Joint Force could encompass activities currently in progress with the Malian armed forces, namely, aeromedical evacuation services, access to life-support consumables (fuel and water) during coordinated MINUSMA-Joint Force operations and other support items such as field defence supplies. Such support would, however, not benefit the other five battalions or other elements of the Joint Force, which would be operating outside Malian territory.

D. Support that could be provided by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission under its current mandate

55. Under its current mandate, one of the core mandated tasks of MINUSMA is to support the restoration and extension of State authority, including through the gradual redeployment of the reconstituted Malian defence and security forces in central and northern Mali, within the overall context of support for the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. Whether that would entail support to Malian military units, which would be deployed to the Joint Force at a later stage, remains to be clarified. MINUSMA support to the Malian defence and security forces includes aeromedical evacuation, life support (water and fuel) to units taking part in coordinated operations with MINUSMA and limited provision of field defence materiel. The recent handover of the MINUSMA camp in Léré, Mali, is an example of indirect support, as the camp is expected to accommodate Joint Force elements going forward.

56. However, any future direct or indirect support provided by MINUSMA to the Joint Force would have to be linked to the Mission's ongoing stabilization efforts in central and northern Mali. A detailed technical agreement would also need to be developed between MINUSMA and the Joint Force to ensure cooperation, coordination and deconfliction within the shared area of responsibilities, including the exchange of liaison officers, the establishment of compliance frameworks (including the human rights due diligence policy framework), training and, potentially, in extremis support.

57. The United Nations is also prepared to assist the Joint Force in facilitating contact with vendors who could consider providing systems contracts through the arrangement already provided to the African Union Commission. All the support measures listed above could be carried out within the Mission's existing resources.

VI. Accompanying measures and mechanisms

58. In addition to the financial and material support already mobilized, the G-5 Sahel countries and their partners have an important role in setting up an appropriate normative and institutional framework to consolidate existing efforts and ensure that the Joint Force becomes an integral part of an overarching regional

approach to tackling political and security challenges in the Sahel, as opposed to a stand-alone military operation. International partners, including the United Nations, can provide substantial support in that regard, all the more so as it does not require an adjustment of existing mandates.

A. Support groups

59. As outlined above, the Joint Force requires an overarching political and strategic framework and sound institutional architecture. The command architecture envisages the establishment of two support groups, one at the political level, with a dotted reporting line to the Defence and Security Committee and the Council of Ministers of G-5 Sahel, and one at the technical level, to support the Joint Force Commander. However, beyond their advisory role, these groups could fill existing gaps with regard to the establishment of the institutional framework of the Joint Force that would ensure linkages with the region. The political-level entity could comprise representatives of G-5 Sahel and other international and regional organizations such as the African Union, ECOWAS, the United Nations and the European Union, as well as members of the Security Council. It would promote regional ownership, as well as linkages to and regular information exchanges with relevant entities and initiatives, such as the Nouakchott Process or the Joint Military Staff Committee of the Sahel Region, and ensure that the operations of the Joint Force are aligned with important political processes, such as the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. The political-level group could also play an important role in mobilizing and centralizing donor support from partners and overseeing the utilization of those funds. Lastly, it could facilitate the generation of outstanding equipment and capabilities. Interactions and reporting lines among the Conference of the Heads of State, the Council of Ministers, the Defence and Security Committee and the permanent secretariat would have to be further specified.

60. Meanwhile, the technical-level support group, comprising experts and planners, could assist both the chief of staff of the Joint Force and the permanent secretariat in Nouakchott in translating strategic decisions made at the political level into specific operational orders and ensuring coherence between development and security initiatives.

B. Permanent secretariat

61. The permanent secretariat of G-5 Sahel was established in 2015 by the Conference of the Heads of State and is under the authority of the Council of Ministers. As a light structure, it was not envisaged to duplicate existing entities, in particular ECOWAS. Given its established presence and permanent nature, however, the secretariat is expected to collaborate closely with the leadership of the Joint Force. To that end and as outlined above, the United Nations could deploy technical experts to the permanent secretariat to enhance planning and coordination capabilities, in addition to the support provided through UNOWAS. In particular, the G-5 Sahel Security Cooperation Platform, established in November 2015 with the support of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, is expected to increase its capacity in the coming months. Channelling information coming from national services would play a critical support role in efforts to combat organized crime and terrorist organizations. A link to the Regional Counter-Radicalization Unit, and to the early-warning mechanism currently under development, could also be envisaged. In addition, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women is providing technical support to the secretariat on

programme priorities, including gender mainstreaming in security and defence, women's leadership in combating violent extremism, development, governance and resilience, and on the recruitment of a gender adviser.

62. There is also the potential to collaborate on the broad development projects under the Priority Investment Programme. Ensuring coherence and synergies between the Joint Force and the development initiatives championed by the permanent secretariat will also be critical.

C. African Union Peace and Security Architecture

63. As presented in paragraph 41 above, the G-5 Sahel initiative to establish a joint force stems from similar efforts made by the African Union. It is therefore important to ensure linkages with other African Union initiatives for the broader region and to firmly embed the Joint Force within the African Union Peace and Security Architecture. At its 679th meeting in April 2017, when it endorsed the decision made by the G-5 Sahel countries to establish the Joint Force, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union noted the need to develop a general framework of cooperation with countries that were not members of G-5 Sahel, in particular with the States parties to the Nouakchott Process, as many of them faced similar security threats, including porous borders, migration and transnational organized crime. The challenges confronting both the Sahel and other parts of Africa highlight even more strongly the need to revitalize the Nouakchott Process. Furthermore, my assessment team was informed by the G-5 Sahel Defence and Security Committee that inter-institutional consultations had been held with the African Union and ECOWAS, underscoring a willingness by the States members of G-5 Sahel to engage with regional entities. In the light of the work already undertaken by the African Union and the United Nations on a human rights compliance framework for African Union-led peace operations, including pursuant to Security Council resolution 2320 (2016), the two organizations should collaborate on establishing a human rights compliance framework for the Joint Force.

D. Human rights compliance and international humanitarian law framework

64. Regardless of the level of United Nations involvement and the support that it may eventually provide, whether directly or indirectly, to the Joint Force, the risks identified with potential reputational damage for the United Nations make it critical to establish a robust and effective international human rights and humanitarian law compliance framework or a similar mechanism that will allow for the integration of protection considerations in the planning and conduct of military operations, in order to prevent and address human rights violations.

65. Joint Force troops will require some level of screening, mentoring and significant training, not only on human rights and international humanitarian law, but also on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, the protection of children and the specificities of counter-terrorism operations. For that purpose, the United Nations and the Joint Force should also agree on modalities for effective mechanisms of joint planning and after-action reviews with civilian-military structures. The Joint Force will have to establish mechanisms to ensure that incidents involving violations of international humanitarian law, harm to civilian objects or civilians (including women and children) and human rights violations (including alleged cases of sexual exploitation and abuse) are reported and then investigated promptly and impartially. Measures should be taken immediately

against the units and individuals allegedly responsible and effective remedies given to the victims. With United Nations support, relevant rules and regulations, as well as guidance on specific issues, such as the handover of children associated with armed groups to civilian child protection actors, rules of engagement, including indirect fire, arrest and detention, interrogations and intelligence collection, will need to be established. Lastly, the international human rights and humanitarian law compliance framework will help to establish the link between Joint Force security operations and other measures to counter terrorism and violent extremism in the region, including through the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel.

66. Such a compliance framework should include the identification and establishment of specific mitigating measures and mechanisms to prevent and address international human rights and humanitarian law violations by the Joint Force, including in the areas of selection and screening, training, planning, after-action review, monitoring and reporting accountability, and rules and regulations. It should also include a detailed risk assessment of United Nations engagement with the Joint Force, adequate mechanisms for monitoring and reporting, including to the Security Council, on possible violations committed by the Joint Force, and coordination mechanisms on the human rights due diligence policy framework at Headquarters and in the field.

67. To support the establishment and implementation of a human rights compliance framework for the Joint Force, the United Nations would need to deploy a core capacity in all States members of G-5 Sahel to provide technical support and carry out monitoring, which would require both adequate resources and support from the relevant United Nations entities and components of MINUSMA.

E. Coordination and intelligence-sharing mechanisms

68. In resolutions 2359 (2017) and 2364 (2017), the Joint Force, MINUSMA and the French forces are urged to ensure and enhance coordination and information-sharing mechanisms, including through the provision of relevant intelligence and liaison officers from the States members of G-5 Sahel to MINUSMA. Pending the generation of its own intelligence assets, the Joint Force will have to rely on shared national intelligence and information provided by international forces. MINUSMA and the French forces have begun deploying liaison officers to the Joint Force's intelligence cells at its headquarters and command posts. In addition, MINUSMA has created a forward command post in Sévaré, staffed with 20 staff officers, including three liaison officers dedicated to the Joint Force. Preparations for the deployment of Joint Force liaison officers to MINUSMA are ongoing. It would be advisable to create additional mechanisms for coordination with other G-5 Sahel security structures, namely the Security Cooperation Platform and the Sahelian Threat Analysis and Early Warning Centre.

VII. Addressing the broader challenges in the Sahel

69. While the support options outlined above could serve to render the Joint Force operational, military operations alone will not suffice to address the security dynamics in the Sahel. In order to tackle the underlying root causes of instability, the Joint Force will be successful only if its operations are complemented by broader initiatives to ensure sustainable development at both the national and regional levels. Furthermore, it is essential that the Joint Force be complemented by effective regional cooperation mechanisms on security information-sharing, countering terrorism and violent extremism and creating synergies for the

empowerment of young people and women in conflict resolution. The United Nations should consolidate gains made through the implementation of its integrated strategy for the Sahel to revamp existing initiatives in support of G-5 Sahel.

70. The G-5 Sahel permanent secretariat oversees a range of ambitious development projects under the Priority Investment Programme (see para. 62 above). These projects represent a long-term, macroeconomic development approach, including large infrastructure and cross-border transportation initiatives. Launching these initiatives will be key to generating new momentum and fostering socioeconomic development to accompany any security response addressing challenges in the Sahel, including through the Joint Force.

71. The international community has also increased its efforts to respond to the multifaceted challenges facing the Sahel, and several comprehensive programmes are being rolled out simultaneously throughout the region. The European Union mobilized €8 billion in 2016, through a wide range of instruments, while the World Bank mobilized about \$1.2 billion in 2015, to support resilience and development interventions in G-5 Sahel countries. The World Bank has also partnered with the United Nations to manage the demographic transition. The United States of America has mobilized \$840 million for the region since 2012, including through resilience initiatives by the United States Agency for International Development. In July 2017, France, Germany and the European Union launched the Alliance for the Sahel initiative, to fast-track the implementation of programmes in the region. Driven by international cooperation departments, the Alliance focuses on food security, agricultural and rural development, job creation for young people, improving energy infrastructure and strengthening good governance and security. Such initiatives significantly contribute to improving lives and livelihoods throughout the region. The increase in donor spending reflects not only the seriousness of the challenges facing the Sahel, but also donors' sustained commitment to finding lasting solutions. Effective coordination between these initiatives, combined with efforts made by countries of the region, including States members of G-5 Sahel, will increase their positive impact and therefore remains critical.

72. Other regional organizations also play a vital role in responding to the challenges facing the Sahel. Within the framework of the African Union Peace and Security Architecture, and in particular the Nouakchott Process, which was specifically aimed at increasing security cooperation in the Sahelo-Saharan region, legal instruments have been adopted to counter terrorism and prevent violent extremism. Meanwhile, ECOWAS has also developed frameworks and initiatives, including the Political Declaration on a Common Position against Terrorism, which includes a counter-terrorism strategy and implementation plan. In 2016, ECOWAS adopted its Regional Action Plan to Address the Growing Problem of Illicit Drug Trafficking, Organized Crime and Drug Abuse in West Africa. ECOWAS and the West African Economic and Monetary Union also work closely with the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel, based in Ouagadougou, which invests in research for food security and the prevention of drought and desertification.

VIII. Observations

73. The ongoing deterioration of the security situation across the Sahel is cause for extreme concern for the countries and populations of the region, which suffer the direct consequences. The international community remains confronted with a continuous downward spiral into another cycle of widespread violence, despite substantial efforts. For the past several decades, the Sahel has suffered from a

combination of structural challenges, marked by a growing deficit in governance and both natural and human-induced shocks, including the negative effects of climate change and the rise of criminal and terrorist networks across the region. Exploiting existing vulnerabilities, these networks have gradually taken control over the lives of many Sahelians and continue to expand their reach from remote areas to urban centres.

74. It is my conviction that, if the international community stands idly by and does not take urgent action to counter these trends, the stability of the entire region and beyond will be in jeopardy, leaving millions of people at risk of violence, with ordinary civilians paying the heaviest price. Ultimately, the international community will bear the responsibility for such a disastrous scenario. That is why, upon assuming my functions as Secretary-General, I made addressing underdevelopment and insecurity in the Sahel one of my immediate priorities. I remain fully committed to providing the region with the full support of the United Nations, including through its integrated strategy for the Sahel and through political and operational support to initiatives intended to counter the influence of terrorism and organized crime across the region.

75. In that context, the establishment of the Joint Force as initiated by the States members of G-5 Sahel represents an opportunity that must not be missed. It demonstrates their collective will to cooperate in order to address transnational problems affecting the region. I therefore commend them for their determination and speedy progress on the establishment of the Joint Force and their continued efforts towards rendering it fully operational. I also wish to acknowledge the leadership and vision of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, who has played an instrumental role in mobilizing the attention of the international community, notably by anchoring the Joint Force firmly within the framework of the African Union Peace and Security Architecture.

76. I firmly believe that support for the G-5 Sahel initiative stems from the recently adopted resolution 2378 (2017), through which the Security Council has recognized the enormous potential of Africa and expressed its intention to step up support for African initiatives and strengthen the African Union Peace and Security Architecture. Time is of the essence. With the resolve of the African Union to address instability in the Sahel, the international community is called upon to decisively refocus its attention to the urgency of tackling governance, security, development and resilience challenges in the region, in support of ongoing initiatives spearheaded by the Heads of State of the G-5 Sahel countries and, in particular, its current Chair, the President of Mali, Ibrahim Boubacar Keita.

77. I welcome the enormous efforts made to date by the States members of G-5 Sahel towards setting up the Joint Force, including steps taken to develop its legal framework and concept of operations, and the significant investment made to attain initial operational capability for the Joint Force headquarters in Sévaré and the command post for the Central Sector in Niamey. However, as emphasized herein, rendering the Joint Force further operational in order to reach its full capability by March 2018, as outlined in the strategic concept of operations, will prove challenging and will require the sustained mobilization of additional financial and other resources. In that context, the United Nations stands ready to generate the support required.

78. Moving forward, I urge the States members of G-5 Sahel to continue to demonstrate unity of purpose and maintain a continuous dialogue with one another, with a view to further developing a joint vision and shared definition of the end-state for the Joint Force, and to reach out to other stakeholders in their resource-mobilization efforts. In that context, it is my belief that the strategic concept of

operations could benefit from further clarification and elaboration with respect to the sequencing of the phase I and the possible launch of a full-fledged regional counter-terrorism force.

79. I wish to stress that the responsibility for mobilizing resources and equipping the Joint Force lies primarily with the States members of G-5 Sahel, in accordance with resolution 2359 (2017). It will be critical for the Joint Force to uphold its obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law to protect civilians and take all feasible precautions to avoid and minimize incidental loss of civilian life, injury to civilians and damage to civilian objects during its operations. This could, moreover, help to facilitate resource mobilization efforts. In that regard, I underscore the importance of establishing a human rights and international humanitarian law compliance framework that is supported by all partners, both politically and financially. Again, the United Nations stands ready to provide its full support. Ensuring cooperation and interoperability with other operations and frameworks, including the Nouakchott Process, Operation Barkhane and MINUSMA, will also be of critical importance.

80. As stated above, reaching full operational capability would require significant investment by the G-5 Sahel countries to address their substantial equipment needs and capability shortfalls. The States members of G-5 Sahel will therefore need assistance from partners. I express my deep gratitude to donors such as the European Union and bilateral partners such as France and Germany, who have already come forward to support the Joint Force. However, the challenges and tasks ahead are daunting. I therefore look forward to the donor conference to be held in Brussels in December 2017, and call upon all partners to extend their support to this important initiative. As I promised the Heads of State of the G-5 Sahel countries, I will personally involve myself in the resource mobilization efforts for this endeavour.

81. I strongly recommend that immediate attention be given to supporting the operations of the Joint Force under phase I, as outlined in the strategic concept of operations, by focusing at this stage on its first phase. To that end, the present report outlines several possible options for support. I urge the Security Council to be ambitious. I firmly believe that only predictable and sustainable funding and support will enable the Joint Force to contribute to the lasting stabilization of the Sahel. Strong multilateral support would also help to leverage ongoing bilateral support initiatives. I hope that the upcoming visit to the region will offer the members of the Security Council an opportunity to garner further insight into the situation on the ground and to understand the urgency of supporting the Joint Force.

82. The proposed support options would benefit the work of MINUSMA, as the Mission alone cannot address the multiple threats facing the Sahel, many of which exceed its geographical scope and core mandate, but have a direct impact on its security and activities. MINUSMA and the Joint Force are complementary. By contributing to the stabilization of the security situation in the region, United Nations support to the Joint Force, including through MINUSMA, would facilitate rather than jeopardize delivery of the Mission's mandate. It is also important, in such a context, that the efforts aimed at strengthening the Mission's capabilities, as provided under resolution 2364 (2017), be stepped up, in order to enable it to cope with the rapidly evolving security environment.

83. It is my firm belief that strong support by the Security Council, including a robust mandate commensurate with the serious threats that the Joint Force will need to address, would not only give the Joint Force reinforced political legitimacy, but also decisively enhance its ability to fulfil its objectives. In that regard, I wish to recall that any mandate under Chapter VII of the Charter would not automatically trigger funding through assessed contributions.

84. In order to increase human security, military measures should be taken in the context of a broader approach that promotes development, good governance, resilience and the promotion of human rights and the rule of law. In that light, I call upon the States members of G-5 Sahel and their partners to revitalize initiatives aimed at addressing the root causes of the recurrent crises and instability in the region. It is time to step up efforts to ensure effective coordination and complementarity between the national and regional initiatives aimed at improving governance and resilience in the Sahel. Without more investment in infrastructure, job creation, good governance and sustainable development, there is a risk of a reversal of the gains attained thus far, including those envisaged by and for the Joint Force. I remain deeply committed to providing such support through the implementation of the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel.

85. Addressing governance shortfalls must be complemented by genuine efforts to improve democratic processes and social justice. In that light, I wish to echo those before me who have underlined the importance of advancing the implementation of the Malian peace process in order to contribute to the stabilization of Mali and, by extension, the stability of its Sahelian neighbours. I call once more upon the Malian authorities and the signatory movements to accelerate the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation, so as to facilitate the return and extension of State authority to the remote areas in northern and central Mali, provide peace dividends and basic social services to the population at last and contribute to reversing the negative effects of radicalization. The adoption, on 5 September, of Security Council resolution 2374 (2017), establishing a sanctions regime specifically targeting Mali, is an important tool in that regard and should help to accelerate the implementation of the peace process, in which the United Nations remains strongly engaged, including through the involvement of MINUSMA and the good offices and tireless commitment of my Special Representative for Mali, Mahamat Saleh Annadif.

86. The success of the Joint Force will also depend on the level of political and operational support that its concept of operations will receive from other regional actors. I therefore call upon Heads of State of the G-5 Sahel countries to reach out to other regional actors with a view to strengthening the legitimacy of the Joint Force and the buy-in of other regional entities. I suggest that the African Union assume a strong role in strengthening and coordinating linkages and collaboration in the region, including with ECOWAS and through the Nouakchott Process. As indicated in paragraph 60 above, the G-5 Sahel technical-level support group could provide institutional assistance with creating such a framework, under the leadership of the rotating chairmanship of G-5 Sahel. I also encourage the African Union to explore ways to ensure information-sharing and coordination between the Joint Force and the Multinational Joint Task Force fighting Boko Haram in the Lake Chad basin, to enhance coherence across the ongoing initiatives in the region.

87. Given the impact of the security situation in the Sahel on regional and international peace and security, the complementarity between the Joint Force and MINUSMA and the remaining work that lies ahead for the Joint Force to reach full operational capacity, I recommend that the Security Council continue to periodically review the deployment of the Joint Force and that I continue to report, in close coordination with the States members of G-5 Sahel and the African Union, on the activities of the Joint Force, including on its operationalization, challenges encountered and possible measures for further consideration, as well as on ways to mitigate any adverse impact of its military operations on civilians, including women and children.

88. In conclusion, I would stress that the risks of not supporting the Joint Force vastly outweigh the risks of supporting it, given the magnitude of the challenges

facing the region. The international community has a collective responsibility to not let this important initiative fail. I therefore reiterate my call upon the members of the Security Council and the international community at large to stand by the States members of G-5 Sahel in this important endeavour.



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Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Abyei

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 32 of Security Council resolution 2352 (2017), in which the Council requested to be informed of progress in implementing the mandate of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) and to have any serious violations of all applicable agreements brought to its immediate attention. It also provides an update on the status of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, as requested in paragraph 8 of resolution 2352 (2017). It covers the period since the issuance of my previous report (S/2017/649), from 25 July to 7 October 2017.

II. Abyei

Conflict dynamics and security situation

2. Conflict in the Abyei Area continued to be characterized by four trends. First, there were reports of intercommunal violence over access to grazing land and water during the annual migration of the Misseriya, which has been a traditional source of conflict between the Misseriya and the Ngak Dinka. Second, criminal activities at the Amiet common market were a persistent problem, with the potential to exacerbate intercommunal tensions as the two communities intermingle at the market and in the surrounding areas. Third, incidents of petty crime continued, largely as a result of the adverse economic situation in the Abyei Area, which includes a lack of livelihood opportunities and the prevalence of arms. Fourth, the presence of armed groups created the potential for inflaming tensions between the two communities. Overall, the number of violent incidents in the Area decreased during the reporting period, which coincided with the rainy season, as compared with the previous period. In particular, there was a marked reduction in violence at the Amiet common market, following proactive engagement by UNISFA with both communities and its robust military posture, which was reinforced at certain flashpoints. Despite a number of violent incidents, the security situation in the Area remained relatively calm. Nonetheless, the situation continued to be volatile, in the absence of progress in implementing the Agreement of 20 June 2011 and establishing the final status of the Area.

3. During the annual southward migration, an estimated 35,000 Misseriya arrived in the Abyei Area. Their subsequent reverse migration northward was delayed by the late arrival of the rains, but was completed by the end of July. The conflict



prevention and mitigation strategy adopted by UNISFA, based on the disengagement line between the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya communities, was effective in reducing large-scale violence, although sporadic incidents continued during the rainy season. One serious incident of cattle-rustling occurred between Goli and Todach, Sector North, on 27 July, in which Ngok Dinka assailants killed three Misseriya herders and stole 141 cows. While the assailants managed to evade UNISFA patrols, the mission recovered and returned 135 of the cows.

4. The significance of the Amiet common market as an economic hub continued to grow, especially in the light of the adverse economic conditions in South Sudan, as the market provides access to otherwise unavailable or costly goods and services. The escalation seen in the number of violent incidents in the vicinity of the market in June and July persisted briefly. On 27 July, two Ngok Dinka men were stabbed in the market; both were treated for their injuries at the local hospital in Agok, Sector South. The following day at the market, on the basis of information provided by Misseriya traders, UNISFA apprehended a Misseriya individual who was suspected of orchestrating the attack. The individual was handed over to Misseriya community leaders on 31 July.

5. With intercommunal tensions running high, UNISFA convened separate meetings with Misseriya community leaders in Diffra, Sector North, and with Ngok Dinka community leaders in Dokura, Sector Centre, respectively, on 26 July. Through those meetings, UNISFA was able to broker an agreement with each community to address contentious issues using the joint peace committees. Leaders from the two communities met in Dokura on 27 July, where they agreed to resolve existing problems by using traditional mechanisms. It was the first time since 2011 that Misseriya community leaders had been welcomed by the Ngok Dinka in Dokura.

6. On 30 July, the joint peace committee comprising members of both the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya communities agreed that the Ngok Dinka community would pay restitution for the 11 Misseriya community members killed in the attacks on 22 July and 27 July. On 22 July, eight Misseriya had been killed on the road between the Amiet common market and Diffra, Sector North (see S/2017/649, para. 11). Trading in the market had been suspended following that attack and the committee also agreed that the market would be reopened immediately to avoid creating further hardship for both communities. This was the second closure of the market in July, with the first following the killing of two Ngok Dinka along the Amiet road on 9 July (*ibid.*, para. 10); the market had re-opened on 19 July.

7. During the reporting period, UNISFA facilitated 82 meetings of the joint peace committee in the three sectors to strengthen intercommunal relations and facilitate reconciliation. In general, intercommunal violence in the Area has subsided since August, notwithstanding a few incidents. On 5 August, two Ngok Dinka were killed and one was injured in Dungoup, Sector Centre, allegedly by a group of Misseriya.

8. Sector Centre continued to be the area with the highest level of crime, as the location of the Amiet common market and owing to its position on the only all-weather route from the town of Abyei towards Diffra and Farouk, Sector North. However, criminal activity has diminished during the ongoing rainy season as a result of hampered mobility. UNISFA continued both aerial and ground patrols around the market and surrounding roads to provide a deterrent security presence.

9. Petty crime remained largely intra-ethnic. An affray involving Ngok Dinka young people in the market, on 13 August, led to the detention of 17 young people by the community protection committee. Some 100 young people protested against the detention, and UNISFA worked with the Ngok Dinka Paramount Chief to contain the situation. In a separate incident, 11 detainees escaped from the detention

cell at the market on 27 August. Members of the community protection committee, in conjunction with UNISFA, apprehended all the escapees. However, one member was injured in the process and subsequently received treatment at the UNISFA clinic.

10. There were two further civilian fatalities in the Abyei Area during the reporting period, in addition to the five people killed in violent intercommunal incidents mentioned in paragraphs 3 and 4. On 26 August, in Jok Jul, near Agok in Sector South, one Ngok Dinka individual was shot dead by unknown assailants. In a separate incident in Agok on the same day, a Nuer language assistant at a hospital run by an international non-governmental organization was shot by three unidentified assailants; he died in hospital a few days later.

11. In addition, there were frequent reports from the local population indicating the presence of unknown armed groups around Sink, Shegeg, Um Kharriet and Alal, in Sector North, and around Dungoup, Sector Centre. UNISFA apprehended an armed South Sudanese individual wearing a South Sudan National Police Service uniform near Noong, Sector Centre, on 16 August, and handed him over to the Ngok Dinka traditional chiefs and South Sudanese national monitors on 19 August. Meanwhile, the Government of the Sudan continued to maintain some 120 police personnel at the Diffra oil complex in the northern Abyei Area. The presence, albeit occasional, of South Sudanese security service personnel and the deployment of Diffra oil police units in the Area directly violate the Agreement of 20 June 2011 and contravene Security Council resolutions 1990 (2011) and 2046 (2012), as well as subsequent resolutions that stipulate that the Area is to be demilitarized, including the withdrawal of all national forces or armed elements of the local communities, except for the presence of UNISFA and the Abyei Police Service.

12. In the light of the sources of insecurity mentioned above, UNISFA continued its efforts to keep the Abyei Area free of weapons. On 11 August, near Shegeg, mission personnel apprehended two Misseriya men in possession of an assault rifle magazine with 30 live rounds and a dagger. In line with the UNISFA mandate to confiscate and destroy weapons, the Mine Action Service destroyed 12 weapons and 108 rounds of small arms ammunition at the UNISFA weapons and ammunition management facility, in a process observed by national monitors from the Sudan and South Sudan. During the reporting period, the Service delivered mine risk education messages to 227 individuals, bringing the total number of persons reached to date within the Area to 64,670, including UNISFA personnel, nomadic herders and returnees. The delivery of the messages, which promote the identification and clearance of explosive ordnance in the Area, in conjunction with the conducting of non-technical surveys, led to the identification and destruction of three explosive remnants of war.

Political developments

13. UNISFA operations continued to enhance peace and stability within the Abyei Area through a robust and targeted military posture and rapid deployment in cases of intercommunal violence. The mission has also been able to adapt to changing conditions, such as the seasonal migration of the Misseriya. Efforts such as the UNISFA initiative to support dialogue between the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya communities have enabled improved intercommunal relations and facilitated stability and reconciliation in the Area. Despite the mission's determination to prevent the recurrence of violence or displacement of civilians, intercommunal tensions persisted in the absence of progress in the implementation of the Agreement of 20 June 2011 or the settlement of the final status of the Area.

14. The Sudan and South Sudan have diametrically opposed positions on the way forward to settle the Abyei question. The Government of the Sudan and the Misseriya insist that their representation in the Abyei Area must be equal to that of their Ngok Dinka counterparts. It should be recalled that, according to the Agreement of 20 June 2011, the Abyei Area Administration should consist of a Chief Administrator nominated by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Government of South Sudan, a Deputy Chief Administrator nominated by the Government of the Sudan and five heads of department, three from the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Government of South Sudan and two from the Government of the Sudan. As to the Abyei Area Council, the parties agreed that it would be composed of 20 members, with the Chairperson to be elected by the members from a list of three nominees from the Government of the Sudan. The Government of South Sudan and Ngok Dinka community leaders disagree with the prospect of equal representation, citing the Agreement of 20 June 2011, as well as the Abyei Protocol, which defined Abyei as the area of the nine Ngok Dinka chiefdoms transferred to Kordofan in 1905, providing the Misseriya with access based only on their traditional rights to graze cattle. They also invoke the final award by the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague, Netherlands, in 2009, which recognized the Ngok Dinka claim on the Abyei Area as the traditional region of the nine Ngok Dinka chiefdoms. The Sudan continues to insist that the establishment of these joint institutions under the Agreement of 20 June 2011 is the only way forward, while South Sudan disagrees on the need for them, citing that the agreed time frames for their establishment have lapsed.

15. In the continued absence of the Abyei Police Service owing to a disagreement on its composition, police officers deployed as a part of UNISFA maintained their advisory and capacity-building role with the community protection committees in the central and southern parts of Abyei, with a focus on sustaining law and order. On 6 September, UNISFA police officers conducted a two-day workshop to build the capacity of 50 members of the community protection committees based in Abyei town on the management of law and order processes. Delays in the establishment of the Abyei Police Service have left a rule-of-law vacuum in the Abyei Area. The establishment of a special police unit to deal with issues relating to nomadic migration would help to maintain law and order and prevent intercommunal conflict.

16. Since the killing of the Ngok Dinka Paramount Chief, Koul Deng Koul, in Abyei in May 2013, the South Sudanese delegation to the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee continues to insist that all meetings of the Committee be convened outside the Abyei Area until reconciliation is achieved between the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya communities. Despite the various efforts undertaken to support such a reconciliation process, the South Sudanese delegation remains unwilling to engage, arguing that the report by the African Union investigation team into the killing of the Paramount Chief should first be released. The African Union Commission is in consultation with the African Union High-level Implementation Panel to determine the best approach to settle the matter of the investigation report, such that it should serve as a confidence-building step between the two communities.

17. The African Union Commission convened an extraordinary session of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee, which had not met in more than two years, in Addis Ababa in May. At the meeting, the members resolved to meet every two months, with the next meeting to be held in the last week of July. However, the meeting in July was not convened. To maintain a forum for discussion, the African Union called for a follow-up meeting of the Committee in Addis Ababa on 16 August. This was to be held in conjunction with a meeting of the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya traditional leaders, as agreed at the meeting of the Committee held on

29 and 30 May 2015, to settle the issue of the killing of the Ngok Dinka Paramount Chief in 2013. Both meetings were postponed the day before the scheduled date at the request of South Sudan, which cited the need to await the outcome of the meeting between the President of South Sudan and the President of the Sudan in Khartoum. The Presidents have been expected to meet since July; however, at the time of finalizing the present report, there was no confirmed date for the meeting.

18. According to media reports, the President of South Sudan issued a decree on 14 September, replacing the South Sudanese Co-Chair of the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee, Deng Mading Mijak, with Deng Arop Kuol. The change was described as routine, as Deng Mading Mijak had served in this capacity since 2013.

19. In its resolution 2352 (2017), the Security Council urged the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan to resume direct negotiations in order to urgently agree on a final settlement of the Abyei question, and called upon the African Union High-level Implementation Panel and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General to the Sudan and South Sudan to support efforts towards the full implementation of the agreements of 2011. In that regard, during their visit to the two countries in July, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations and the Special Envoy engaged with both the Sudan and South Sudan regarding the importance of the concrete progress requested by the Council. This was followed by a joint visit by the African Union, the African Union High-level Implementation Panel and the Department for Peacekeeping Operations in August to seek agreement from the parties on areas in which progress could be made, in particular with regard to the joint institutions stipulated in the Agreement of 20 June 2011. In addition, I wrote to the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on 13 September to seek support for advancing the political resolution of the Abyei issue.

Operating environment

20. As at 7 October, the UNISFA military component stood at 4,316 personnel (4,294 troops and 235 military observers/staff officers), against an authorized ceiling of 4,791. During the reporting period, UNISFA troops conducted 4,044 day patrols and 2,253 night patrols, including 1,431 escorts. The UNISFA police component stood at 33 officers (23 men and 10 women), of an authorized total of 50, which is the highest number deployed since the mission was established. The police officers are deployed at four team sites in Abyei town, Agok, Banton and Diffra. An additional team site will be established at Todach, Sector North, near the Amiet common market, to allow the police to work closely with the community protection committee at the market on law and order issues. The number of civilian staff stood at 137 international, 32 United Nations Volunteers and 81 national staff, against an authorized total of 161 international, 33 United Nations Volunteers and 89 national staff posts. The Government of the Sudan issued 61 visas for UNISFA personnel during the reporting period, while 110 visas remained pending for 18 staff members, 32 military personnel, 13 police officers, 4 Mine Action Service contractors, 26 official visitors and consultants and 17 contractors.

21. The mission continued to upgrade the infrastructure and environmental installations at all camps. Depreciated prefabricated buildings were replaced at seven company operating bases (Farouk, Diffra, Todach and Goli in Sector North and Tejalei, Agok and Marial Achak in Sector South). The conversion of the Noong temporary operating base into a permanent operating base was 92 per cent complete. Site preparation works at the expansion site and the improvement of the challenging living conditions at the mission headquarters in Abyei were 78 per cent complete. The construction of new troop accommodation was completed, while staff accommodation at the expansion site was 61 per cent complete. With regard to the

environmental and hygiene aspects, of the 36 planned wastewater treatment plants for all UNISFA bases, 17 have been installed, of which 15 are operational.

22. UNISFA continued to operate four helicopters and three fixed-wing aircraft. Of the missions undertaken during the reporting period, 13 were aerial patrols of the Abyei Area, 9 were in support of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism and others were reconnaissance missions. The mission continued to share the costs of one of its aircraft with the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and received ground-handling support from the contracted services providers of MONUSCO and the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) in Entebbe, Uganda, and Khartoum, respectively. During the reporting period, the mission completed the rotation of 2,105 troops (1,062 inbound and 1,043 outbound) and the transportation of 116,063 kg of goods (41,935 kg inbound and 74,128 kg outbound) through the Kadugli airport, as the mission remained unauthorized by the Government of the Sudan to use the 90 per cent completed airstrip in Athony, which continued to put a considerable strain on its air assets. Similarly, 115,026 kg (41,230 kg inbound and 73,796 kg outbound) of goods were transported by road through Kadugli.

Humanitarian situation

23. Limited or absent basic services, displacements from South Sudan and returnees to the area who had left at the onset of the Abyei crisis resulted in continued significant humanitarian needs in the Abyei Area. United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and non-governmental organizations continued to provide humanitarian and recovery assistance to 163,000 vulnerable people. These included persons displaced from neighbouring areas in South Sudan and seasonal Misseriya nomads. Since my previous report, an estimated 7,500 people displaced by conflict in South Sudan have transited through Abyei to reach destinations in the Sudan. In addition, there were reports of new arrivals from South Sudan who had recently settled in Abyei; exact numbers remained unverified owing to impassable roads during the ongoing rainy season.

24. Despite the logistical challenges, 99 per cent of the food assistance requirement for the rainy season was stored in advance in seven warehouses in central and southern parts of Abyei, through South Sudan. Some 100,000 vulnerable people benefited from activities relating to food assistance, mainly food for assets, food for education and general food distribution for those displaced from South Sudan. Food support continued to be provided to the 27 primary schools in the central and southern parts of the Abyei Area, including Abyei town, reaching 21,700 schoolchildren.

25. The 13 health facilities throughout the Abyei Area remained operational with support from the humanitarian community. In addition, awareness-raising and capacity-building activities were conducted, including on-the-job training for clinical staff, training of elementary health-service personnel and the holding of health awareness sessions. A targeted supplementary feeding programme continued to cover 4,300 children aged under 5 years and pregnant and lactating women. In July, the health cluster conducted a "mop-up" vaccination campaign in three villages north of the River Kiir/Bahr al-Arab. Assistance efforts to provide a safe water supply benefited some 16,000 people. Other major activities during the reporting period included the drilling of four new boreholes, the rehabilitation of eight hand pumps, the construction of 10 school hand-washing facilities and the distribution of water supply containers and hygiene kits to 300 families in the sites established for displaced persons. In the northern Abyei Area, ensuring a safe water

supply remained a challenge as the water table is considerably low and the communities are scattered.

26. Early recovery and transition activities within the reporting period included the construction of a community hall in Abyei town, and the rehabilitation of the Abyei Referral Hospital, Abyei Women's Centre and Abyei Youth Centre had commenced. In addition, more than 200 young people and women were targeted through livelihood ventures, including vegetable production and the promotion of small businesses. As a result of an outbreak of suspected blackleg in Ameth-bek cattle camp, over 30,000 livestock were vaccinated to prevent the spread of diseases as livestock are moved to and from neighbouring areas into the Abyei Area for grazing and to be traded at Amiet market.

27. As a result of the weak local protection institutions and mechanisms within the Abyei Area, women and children continued to be exposed to the risk of violence, exploitation and abuse in some areas. Pursuant to paragraph 29 of Security Council resolution 2352 (2017), UNISFA has completed the recruitment of a Women and Child Protection Adviser. At the time of finalizing the present report, a visa application for the selected candidate had been submitted to the Government of the Sudan on 23 August and was pending approval.

III. Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism

28. In December 2010, the parties had agreed to establish a joint political and security mechanism to facilitate coordination between the security forces of the Sudan and South Sudan in implementing the arrangements of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, particularly on their common border. The agreement of 30 July 2011 established a border monitoring and verification mission, which was made operational as the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism through the agreement on security arrangements of 27 September 2012. Nearly six years later, the Mechanism remains at its initial operating capability, with only two of the four sector headquarters in operation. Despite the lack of progress, the two countries and the African Union view the Mechanism as essential for border security and for facilitating the demarcation of the border. In that connection, the Sudan and South Sudan transmitted a joint letter to the Security Council on 23 September to request the continued support of the United Nations for the Mechanism.

Conditions required to achieve full operating capability

29. Pursuant to Security Council resolution 2352 (2017), during the reporting period, UNISFA engaged with the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan to make progress in relation to the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism. As stipulated in the resolution, continued investment in achieving the full operating capability of the Mechanism should be based on the conditions outlined in 2015 (see S/2015/439), namely the resolution of the dispute over the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone, the resumption of border demarcation discussions, the holding of regular meetings of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism and the granting of full freedom of movement for the operations of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism. The status of implementation of these conditions is outlined in the paragraphs below.

Dispute concerning the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone

30. During the extraordinary meeting of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism, held in Addis Ababa on 14 October 2015, the parties agreed that the centreline of the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone represented only the location of

the separation line between the armed forces of the two countries and had no bearing on the definitive and final location of the boundary. With this decision, the Sudan and South Sudan resolved their dispute over the centreline of the Zone and provided the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism with a defined area of operations.

Border demarcation discussions

31. Following the meeting of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism held on 15 May 2017, UNISFA invited the technical team of the African Union Border Programme to mark on the ground the coordinates of the border crossing corridors. From 14 to 22 September, the team undertook an initial mission to UNISFA to meet the parties and prepare the support, identification and marking on the ground of the border crossing points at Safaha, Sumayh, Tishwin and Abu Qussa. Owing to inclement weather, prior mine clearance of the area could not be undertaken and, as a result, ground reconnaissance and marking were postponed. Furthermore, the technical representatives of the parties, whose participation is crucial to the preparation of the ground mission and, in particular, raising the awareness of the population, did not attend this initial mission.

32. With regard to the discussions on the contested areas of the border, the documents required for the finalization of a non-binding opinion on the disputed, and then the claimed, areas of the border are yet to be provided by the parties to the African Union technical experts for their consideration.

Meetings of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism

33. The Joint Political and Security Mechanism held its last extraordinary meeting on 14 and 15 May (see S/2017/649), during which the parties committed themselves to resuming regular meetings at the agreed 45-day intervals. Overall, limited progress has been made in the implementation of the decisions taken at that meeting, in particular with regard to the establishment of the ad hoc committee for the 14 Mile Area. The Sudan postponed the regular meeting of the Mechanism, which had been scheduled to be held in Juba by the end of June, accusing South Sudan of supporting rebels involved in a confrontation with the Sudanese Armed Forces in late May and early June and of having its forces north of the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone. In response, South Sudan accused the Sudan of harbouring opposition groups on its territory and did not invite the Sudan to Juba for the meeting of the Mechanism.

34. To prepare for the meeting of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism scheduled for June 2017, the Joint Security Committee was to implement its decisions of 30 September 2016. The decisions addressed the alleged presence of the armed forces in the north and south of the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone and the support for armed groups and the expulsion of those groups. However, the Mechanism did not meet in Juba by mid-June as agreed. The Joint Security Committee was established through a decision adopted by the Mechanism at its meeting held in April 2013 to discuss such concerns and resolve such allegations. However, the Committee has not met or implemented the decisions emanating from the meeting of the Mechanism held in May 2017. Both parties reiterated during the reporting period that specific action could be taken only following the expected meeting between the President of the Sudan and the President of South Sudan, for which a date is yet to be announced.

Freedom of movement

35. Considerable progress has been made by the Government of South Sudan to grant full freedom of movement in relation to the operations of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism. The helipad at Gok Machar is now fully functional and expedited approval procedures to provide clearance for aerial patrols conducted by the Mechanism have been implemented. Of 18 planned aerial patrols within the reporting period, only 4 were cancelled, representing a cancellation rate of 22 per cent. The cancellations resulted from inclement weather (on two occasions), technical difficulties and the unavailability of air assets (on one occasion each). Compared with the average rate of 56 per cent, this was the lowest cancellation rate recorded since the Mechanism began operations in 2013.

Operational progress towards full operating capability

36. To advance the implementation of the decisions adopted at the most recent meeting of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism, held in May, UNISFA proposed plans to the parties to establish four temporary observation sites in the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone, at Safaha, Sumayh, Tishwin and Abu Qussa, in the vicinity of 4 of the 10 agreed border crossing corridors. The presence of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism at these sites would serve as a confidence-building measure towards marking border crossing points and subsequently establishing immigration posts with a view to normalizing relations between the two countries at agreed locations.

37. On 24 August, UNISFA sought clearance on the plans and the reconnaissance routes from both parties. In a positive move, both parties agreed to participate in a mission to mark the four temporary observation sites. Representatives of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism from Juba and Khartoum, together with their national monitors based at the Sector headquarters in Kadugli, arrived in Abyei on 14 September to begin joint reconnaissance missions with UNISFA with a view to identifying the four temporary observation sites. The joint team consisted of representatives of the Mechanism, national monitors, the technical team of the African Union Border Programme and UNISFA, including the Mine Action Service.

38. According to the plan developed by UNISFA, the joint team would move to each location by helicopter, while a ground team with the Mine Action Service would carry out exploratory operations in mine-resistant, ambush-protected vehicles to ensure that the landing site was free from any explosive ordnance. Upon review, the joint team established that, owing to the rainy season, the roads would be impassable for the heavy vehicles. Consequently, the joint team decided to initiate aerial reconnaissance missions as an alternative. It was noted that further security clearances were required for the Abu Qussa location, with a new flight plan required to account for refuelling at Bentiou, South Sudan, for the return journey.

39. On 16 September, initial aerial reconnaissance missions were conducted by UNISFA aircrews for the sites at Safaha, Sumayh and Tishwin, with the joint teams to join in once the aircrews were familiar with the routes and locations. The following day, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) informed UNISFA at the sector headquarters of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism in Gok Machar, South Sudan, that SPLA troops in the Sumayh area had been unaware of the aerial reconnaissance mission and had requested permission to shoot down the helicopter. UNISFA requested the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of South Sudan to investigate the incident, as approval of the plan and clearance for the route had been provided in advance. On 29 September, the SPLA Chief of Defence Forces responded by stating that there

were communication problems with the commander based in the Gok Machar area and that he had been called to Juba to explain his actions.

40. On 20 September, the joint team conducted aerial reconnaissance of Safaha, Sumayh and Tishwin, but further clearances for Abu Qussa could not be obtained within the time constraints. Joint ground reconnaissance missions for all four locations will be conducted in the forthcoming dry season.

41. In a further show of commitment to making tangible progress towards achieving the full operational capability of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, the Government of South Sudan approved and facilitated a reconnaissance mission, from 14 to 17 August, to determine the site of the fourth Mechanism sector headquarters at either Malakal or Renk. The team recommended Renk as the more suitable site, although a preliminary request for the identification of suitable land at both locations has been submitted to the Government. Acquisition will proceed only after a decision is taken by the Joint Political and Security Mechanism at its next meeting.

Operations

42. During a routine aerial reconnaissance, on 20 September, an unknown camp was observed in the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone along the route AM-122 within the 14 Mile Area. An unknown military presence was also observed in the vicinity of the three temporary observation sites at Safaha, Sumayh and Tishwin during the joint aerial reconnaissance missions undertaken on the same day. UNISFA is verifying these reports and conducted preliminary aerial verification patrols over Tishwin on 2 October and in the 14 Mile Area on 4 October, which were inconclusive. In this regard, the mission plans to conduct further aerial patrols with upgraded optical systems along the border crossing corridors and in the vicinity of the three temporary observation sites to further verify any military presence in the Zone. These will be followed by ground patrols to confirm or disprove any military deployment in the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone by either party. If the presence of armed forces is confirmed at any of these locations, it would raise concerns regarding the claims by the parties that they have withdrawn their troops from the Zone and would reinforce the importance of continuous monitoring of the border.

43. Lastly, in line with the recommendation of the strategic review of 5 April 2017, UNISFA will conduct an assessment with technical experts from New York from 10 to 17 October to determine a possible cost-neutral upgrade option to improve visibility during aerial patrols. In the interim, UNISFA has procured a high-resolution camera that can be used immediately without any modifications to the aircraft. In addition, the mission has procured satellite imagery, in particular high-resolution images to cover areas of high interest in the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone.

IV. Financial aspects

44. The General Assembly, by its resolution 71/298, appropriated the amount of \$266.7 million for the maintenance of the Force for the period from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018. As at 20 September, unpaid assessed contributions to the Special Account for UNISFA amounted to \$70.0 million. Total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations as at that date amounted to \$4,095.5 million. Troop costs have been reimbursed for the period up to 30 June, while the costs of contingent-owned equipment have been reimbursed for the period up to 31 March, in accordance with the quarterly payment schedule.

V. Observations and recommendations

45. UNISFA has clearly had a stabilizing role in Abyei and along the border region between the Sudan and South Sudan. No major confrontation has taken place between the forces of the two countries in the Abyei Area or the border area since 2011 and 2012, respectively. I commend the mission for its proactive posture and for supporting mediation and political engagement activities, which attest to the mission's commitment to peace, stability and the well-being of the people of Abyei and the border area.

46. The Force was set up to create a secure environment to enable the Sudan and South Sudan to settle their disputes at the negotiating table. UNISFA has played the role expected of it and Abyei has now become an area of refuge for displaced persons from South Sudan and a vibrant trade hub between the Sudan and South Sudan that serves as a testament to the strong bonds between the two peoples and the benefits of strong neighbourly relations.

47. The resilience of the local population is evident, with traditional leaders weighing in against spoilers. Cooperation and efforts to preserve the peace are most apparent in the Amiet common market, which remains the most visible symbol of the commitment of the two communities to peace and reconciliation. In this regard, I urge the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan to consolidate the gains achieved by UNISFA at the local level by engaging actively in discussions to resolve the deadlock over establishing the Abyei Area Administration and Council and constitute the Abyei Police Service in order to address the pressing security and humanitarian concerns facing the people of Abyei.

48. While work continues with both parties to set up interim arrangements that would improve the lives of the people, efforts must also be directed at furthering the discussion on the final status of the territory. In that regard, I intend to approach the African Union to request an update on the status of the process. In my letter of 13 September addressed to the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, I sought support to advance the political resolution of the Abyei issue and prevent it from becoming a frozen conflict. Account is taken, of course, of the difficult internal circumstances facing the two countries and, in particular, of the intensifying crisis that has persisted in South Sudan since 2013, which has had a significant impact on the ability of the Government to further decision-making, including on the Abyei question. Nevertheless, five years after the signing of the cooperation agreements of 27 September 2012 and the proposal put forward by the African Union High-level Implementation Panel on 21 September 2012, the two countries must take advantage of the established mechanisms to solve outstanding issues and implement decisions. This is essential to further good neighbourly relations and avoid a relapse into conflict. I encourage the Governments to build on the progress made in other areas, notably regarding the implementation of the Agreement on Oil and Related Economic Matters, and to take the measures necessary to implement their pending bilateral agreements.

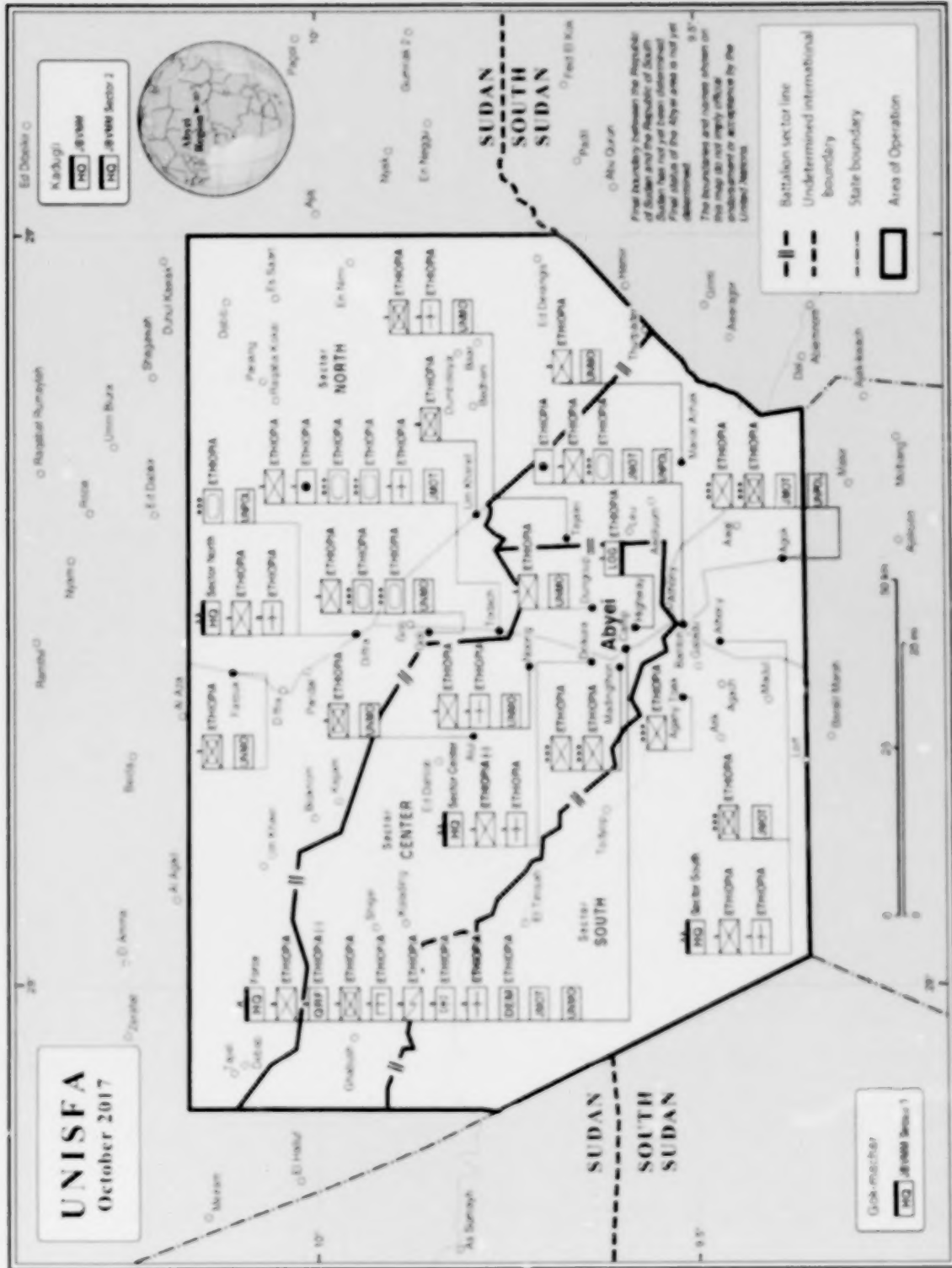
49. Earlier in the year, the two Governments made strides towards revitalizing their political dialogue, with a view to implementing their agreements on security arrangements, by convening an extraordinary meeting of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism in May. However, I am concerned that no further progress has subsequently been made. I am encouraged by the parties' participation in the reconnaissance missions to establish the four temporary observation sites in the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone, which represents a confidence-building measure that allows both parties to come together to mark the border crossing points.

50. I thank the two Ministers for Foreign Affairs for their joint letter dated 23 September, in which they stressed their commitment to the agreements and requested continued support from the international community. Much is expected of the meeting envisaged between the President of the Sudan and the President of South Sudan, and I urge them to work together to unlock the status quo, both by discussing a way forward on Abyei and by moving forward on the agreed security agenda. Failing that, I call upon the African Union High-level Implementation Panel to convene an extraordinary session of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism. In the same vein, I call upon the Peace and Security Council of the African Union to do its utmost to encourage the two Governments to collaborate constructively in resolving their problems.

51. As stressed by the Security Council during its previous consultations on UNISFA, the primary responsibility rests with the Sudan and South Sudan to demonstrate progress in implementing the provisions of their agreements on security arrangements of 2012 in order to address outstanding issues on their common border. I strongly reiterate the point that the situation will remain in limbo until the parties act responsibly to perform their international legal duties under the agreements, regardless of the resources channelled into maintaining relative stability in Abyei. In that connection, I call upon the Security Council to redouble its efforts to compel the parties to discharge their obligations. To that end, the Organization must work in tandem with the African Union, the Special Envoy and other partners.

52. In considering the future of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, while bearing in mind the mutually reinforcing roles of the Mechanism and UNISFA, the Security Council must maintain its emphasis on the primary responsibility of the parties. At the same time, I urge the Council to give due consideration to the imperative to preserve the achievements of relative stability realized through the work of UNISFA, both towards maintaining peace and stability in the Abyei Area and preventing confrontations along the border between the Sudan and South Sudan. These achievements should be protected to contain the real risk of relapse into international armed conflict. I therefore recommend the extension of the mandate of UNISFA for another six months with the expectation that both Governments will make progress towards fulfilling the commitments that they have defined for themselves in their agreements.

53. In conclusion, I extend my sincere gratitude and appreciation to the acting Head of Mission and Force Commander, Major General Tesfay Gidey Hailemichael, and to UNISFA personnel for their efforts to maintain peace and stability in the Abyei Area, under challenging conditions. I also commend my Special Envoy, Nicholas Haysom, as well as the African Union High-level Implementation Panel, the African Union Commission, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union and the Government of Ethiopia, for remaining engaged with the two Governments in support of the stabilization of the Abyei Area.



**Security Council**Distr.: General
24 October 2017

Original: English

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Abyei**Corrigendum****1. Page 5**After paragraph 19, insert a new paragraph *reading*

19 bis. The African Union High-level Implementation Panel proposal of 21 September 2012 on the final status for the Abyei Area, which includes the organization of a referendum, was accepted by the Peace and Security Council of the African Union as representing a fair, equitable and workable solution to the dispute between the two countries through a communiqué on 24 October 2012. The Government of the Sudan continued to take issue with the proposal primarily owing to how it set out the eligibility criteria for the referendum, excluding temporary residents, such as the Misseriya pastoralists, from the vote. This continued impasse prompted the Ngok Dinka to hold a unilateral referendum in October 2013, with the overwhelming majority of voters choosing to join South Sudan. However, this outcome has not been endorsed by President Salva Kiir, who stated that South Sudan did not support any unilateral referendum. The Peace and Security Council of the African Union continued to call on the Presidents to resume discussions on the final status of Abyei, but has not imposed its decision of 24 October 2012.

2. Paragraph 20, first sentence*For 4,316 read 4,529*

**Security Council**

Distr.: General
17 October 2017
English
Original: French

Letter dated 16 October 2017 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General

Further to the letter dated 15 September 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Ethiopia, I have the honour to inform you that the members of the Security Council have agreed to send a mission to the Sahel region from 19 to 22 October 2017. They also agreed on the terms of reference of the mission (see annex).

I will be leading the mission together with Ambassador Tekeda Alemu (Ethiopia) and Ambassador Sebastiano Cardi (Italy).

Following consultations with Council members, it has been agreed that the composition of the mission will be as follows:

Ambassador Sacha Sergio Llorentty Soliz (Bolivia)

Mr. Zhang Dianbin (China)

Mr. Seif Alla Youssef Kandeel (Egypt)

Ambassador Tekeda Alemu (Ethiopia)

Ambassador François Delattre (France)

Ambassador Sebastiano Cardi (Italy)

Ambassador Yasuhisa Kawamura (Japan)

Mr. Didar Temenov (Kazakhstan)

Mr. Petr Iliichev (Russian Federation)

Mr. Abdoulaye Barro (Senegal)

Ambassador Olof Skoog (Sweden)

Mr. Eduard Fesko (Ukraine)

Ambassador Jonathan Guy Allen (United Kingdom)

Ms. Amy Noel Tachco (United States)

Ambassador Luis Bermúdez (Uruguay)

I should be grateful if you could have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) François Delattre
President of the Security Council



Annex

Terms of reference of the Security Council mission to the Sahel region

1. The Security Council will carry out a mission to the Sahel region through visits to Mali, Mauritania and Burkina Faso.
2. The mission will be carried out within the framework of Security Council resolutions 2359 (2017), 2364 (2017) and 2374 (2017) and in accordance with information given in the Press Statement issued as SC/12955 (2017).
3. The mission will be co-led by France, Ethiopia and Italy.
4. The objectives of the mission are as follows:

Group of Five Sahel States

(a) To assess the situation in the Group of Five Sahel States, including regarding the level and the nature of the threat posed by terrorism and transnational organized crime (including arms and drug trafficking, the smuggling of migrants, trafficking in persons), and explore means to provide support in confronting these threats on national, sub-regional and regional levels;

(b) To recognize the determination and ownership of the Governments of the G5 Sahel States to address the impact of terrorism and transnational organized crime, including through the conduct of cross-border joint military counter-terrorist operations, to welcome the deployment of the G5 Sahel Joint Force (FC-G5S) throughout the territories of its contributing countries, with a view to restoring peace and security in the Sahel region, and to assess its level of operationalization.

(c) To underline the need for the rapid and effective implementation of regional strategies encompassing security, governance, development, human rights and humanitarian issues, such as the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel.

(d) To underline the need for the operations of the FC-G5S to be conducted in full compliance with international law, including international humanitarian law, human rights law and refugee law, as applicable, and for the FC-G5S to take active steps to minimize the risk of harm to civilians in all areas of operation, and to further underline that a gender perspective should be taken into account in implementing all aspects of the strategic concept of operations of the FC-G5S.

(e) To assess the observations and recommendations contained in the written report of the Secretary General requested by resolution 2359, and to discuss them with the various interlocutors of the Security Council.

(f) To prepare for the meeting of the Security Council aimed at reviewing the deployment of the FC-G5S four months after the adoption of resolution 2359 (2017).

In this connection, the Security Council will suggest to hold a meeting with representatives of the Group of Five Sahel States, which will constitute an opportunity to exchange views with all those States, including those which are not to be visited during this mission.

Implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali

(g) To underline that lasting peace and security in the Sahel region will not be achieved without a full, effective and inclusive implementation of the Agreement.

(h) To urge the parties to accelerate the implementation of the Agreement, more than two years after its signing.

(i) To underline the establishment of a new sanctions regime concerning Mali.

(j) To call on the members of the Agreement Monitoring Committee and other relevant international partners to sustain their support to the implementation of the Agreement.

5. The mission will seek to achieve these objectives through meetings with, among others:

Mali

- The Government of Mali
- The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)
- Representatives from international security presences in Mali (including the Group of Five Sahel Joint Force (FC-G5S), European Union missions and French forces)
- Representatives from actors involved in the implementation of the peace and reconciliation agreement in Mali, including the parties and members of the international mediation

Mauritania

- The Government of Mauritania
- The permanent secretary of the Group of Five Sahel States

Burkina Faso

- The Government of Burkina Faso

6. The mission will also seek to achieve its objectives through: (a) a visit to the FC-G5S headquarters in Sévaré, Mali, which will include a briefing from the command of the joint force on its activities; (b) interaction with members of civil society and non-governmental organizations, including women's organizations and youth organizations.

7. The mission will also hold a commemoration of the terrorist attack which took place in Ouagadougou on the night of 13 August 2017 and pay tribute to the peacekeepers that lost their lives while serving under MINUSMA mandate.

8. The mission will seek to implement lessons learned from previous Security Council missions, including regarding modalities of association of a representative from the African Union.

**General Assembly
Security Council**

Distr.: General
20 October 2017
English
Original: Arabic

**General Assembly
Seventy-second session**
Agenda items 72 (c) and 109

**Security Council
Seventy-second year**

**Promotion and protection of human rights: human rights
situations and reports of special rapporteurs
and representatives**

Measures to eliminate international terrorism

**Identical letters dated 16 October 2017 from the Permanent
Representative of Jordan to the United Nations addressed to the
Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council**

On instructions from my Government, I refer to the letter dated 29 September 2017 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations, and wish to make the following points:

The Government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan rejects the claims made in the Syrian representative's letter concerning Jordan, to the effect that missiles armed with chemical warheads have been transported over the Jordanian border.

My Government finds it deplorable that the Permanent Representative of Syria persists in tarnishing the name of Jordan in his letters concerning terrorist activities on Syrian territory. These deceitful accusations come at a time when Jordan has been commended by the international community and the members of the Security Council for combating terrorism by all of the military, security and ideological means at its disposal.

While the Permanent Representative of Syria hurls fresh accusations at my country, the latter has been complying with the relevant Security Council resolutions by providing cross-border humanitarian assistance to its Syrian brethren in order to alleviate the impact of the horrific war in Syria. It has also worked intensively to establish a de-escalation zone in southern Syria.

Jordan has opened its border to its Syrian brethren and offered them protection and essential services. It continues to support the development of a political solution that would preserve the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter issued as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Sima Bahous
Permanent Representative

17-18606 (E) 241017 251017



Please recycle





**General Assembly
Security Council**

Distr.: General
19 October 2017

Original: English

**General Assembly
Seventy-second session
Third Committee**

Agenda item 72 (c)

**Promotion and protection of human rights: human
rights situations and reports of special rapporteurs
and representatives**

**Security Council
Seventy-second year**

**Letter dated 12 October 2017 from the Permanent Representative
of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General**

I have the honour to enclose herewith a statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine dated 11 October 2017 regarding yet another wave of repression by the Russian occupation authorities in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (see annex).

I would appreciate your kind assistance in having the present letter and its annex distributed as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 72 (c), and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Volodymyr **Yelchenko**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative



Annex to the letter dated 12 October 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine regarding yet another wave of repression by the Russian occupation authorities in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine expresses its resolute protest to yet another wave of groundless searches and illegal detentions of the citizens of Ukraine by the Russian occupation authorities in the city of Bakhchysaray (the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Ukraine).

As a result, 6 people were illegally detained, in addition to that at least 9 activists were arrested only for coming to support their compatriots and standing nearby the houses where searches were conducted.

The onslaught of the occupants against those opposing the occupation regime, in particular Crimean Tatar activists and Ukrainians, once again testifies the continuation of Russia's repressive policy with the aim to eradicate any dissent voices and intimidate the population of the Crimean peninsula.

Moreover, targeted searches in the homes of Muslims are a clear manifestation of persecutions on religious grounds.

Repressions, illegal detentions, enforced disappearances, abductions, tortures and other violations of fundamental human rights and freedoms have become a regular practice of the Russian occupation authorities in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. Russia keeps blatantly and cynically violating its international legal obligations, UN General Assembly resolutions 68/262 of 27 March 2014 "Territorial integrity of Ukraine" and 71/205 of 19 December 2016 "Situation of human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine)", the order of the International Court of Justice on provisional measures in the case Ukraine vs the Russian Federation regarding the application of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

We call on the international community to actively stand for the rights and freedoms of the population of the Crimean peninsula and to force Russia to stop malicious persecutions against those opposing the occupation.

**General Assembly
Security Council**Distr. General
19 October 2017

Original: English

General Assembly
Seventy-second session
Agenda item 72 (c)
**Promotion and protection of human rights: human
rights situations and reports of special rapporteurs
and representatives**

Security Council
Seventy-second year

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I would appreciate your kind assistance in having the present letter and its annex distributed as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 72 (c), and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Volodymyr Yelchenko
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

* Reissued for technical reasons on 8 November 2017; previously issued under the symbol A/C.3/72/13-S/2017/873.



Annex to the letter dated 12 October 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

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The onslaught of the occupants against those opposing the occupation regime, in particular Crimean Tatar activists and Ukrainians, once again testifies the continuation of Russia's repressive policy with the aim to eradicate any dissent voices and intimidate the population of the Crimean peninsula.

Moreover, targeted searches in the homes of Muslims are a clear manifestation of persecutions on religious grounds.

Repressions, illegal detentions, enforced disappearances, abductions, tortures and other violations of fundamental human rights and freedoms have become a regular practice of the Russian occupation authorities in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. Russia keeps blatantly and cynically violating its international legal obligations, UN General Assembly resolutions 68/262 of 27 March 2014 "Territorial integrity of Ukraine" and 71/205 of 19 December 2016 "Situation of human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine)", the order of the International Court of Justice on provisional measures in the case Ukraine vs the Russian Federation regarding the application of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

We call on the international community to actively stand for the rights and freedoms of the population of the Crimean peninsula and to force Russia to stop malicious persecutions against those opposing the occupation.

**Security Council**

Distr.: General
20 October 2017
English
Original: Russian

**Letter dated 17 October 2017 from the Permanent Representative
of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the
Secretary-General**

I have the honour to transmit herewith information bulletins from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence on the status of implementation of the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic for the period 14–17 October 2017 (see annex).

I should be grateful if this letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) V. Nebenzia



Annex to the letter dated 17 October 2017 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence on the status of implementation of the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (14 October 2017)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported nine incidents of gunfire in the following governorates: three in Aleppo, three in Damascus and three in Dar'a.

The Turkish representative office has reported three violations: two in Damascus Governorate and one in Hama Governorate.

Most of the incidents of small arms being fired indiscriminately have been reported in areas controlled by fighters of the terrorist groups Nusra Front and Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours, the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has not carried out any humanitarian operations.

In total, 1,645 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,232.9 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, Russian field medics have provided medical assistance to one person.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 59,744 residents.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

Over the past 24 hours, no ceasefire agreements have been signed with populated areas.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is unchanged — it is still 2,249.

Negotiations on joining the ceasefire regime continued with armed opposition groups in Aleppo, Damascus, Hama, Homs and Qunaytirah Governorates.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence on the status of implementation of the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (15 October 2017)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported four incidents of gunfire: two in Damascus Governorate and two in Dar'a Governorate.

The Turkish representative office has reported one violation in Homs Governorate.

Most of the incidents of small arms being fired indiscriminately have been reported in areas controlled by fighters of the terrorist groups Nusra Front and ISIL.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours, the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has carried out one humanitarian operation:

A total of 2 tons of flour and rice was delivered to Dayr al-Bukht in Dar'a Governorate.

In total, 1,646 humanitarian operations have been carried out. The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,234.824 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to 117 residents.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 59,861 residents.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

Over the past 24 hours, three ceasefire agreements have been signed with the following populated areas:

Dayr Ful in Homs Governorate;

Khunayfis in Hama Governorate;

Khirbat al-Jami' in Hama Governorate.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process has increased to 2,252.

Negotiations on joining the ceasefire regime continued with armed opposition groups in Aleppo, Damascus, Hama, Homs and Qunaytirah governorates.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence on the status of implementation of the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (16 October 2017)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported 10 incidents of gunfire in the following governorates: 4 in Dar'a Governorate, 3 in Aleppo Governorate and 3 in Damascus Governorate.

The Turkish representative office has reported two violations in Idlib and Hama Governorates.

Most of the incidents of small arms being fired indiscriminately have been reported in areas controlled by fighters of the terrorist groups Nusra Front and ISIL.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours, the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has carried out two humanitarian operations:

At Aleppo University Hospital, assistance was provided to residents of Aleppo Governorate by forces from the mobile team of the medical unit in Aleppo;

In Afrin in Afrin District, a total of 0.5 tons of medicine was distributed at the municipal hospital.

In total, 1,648 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,235.3 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, Russian field medics have provided medical assistance to 56 people.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 59,917 residents.

One United Nations humanitarian convoy was dispatched: a total of 42 tons of food products and medicine was delivered to Qabun in Damascus Governorate.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

Over the past 24 hours, no ceasefire agreements have been signed with populated areas.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is unchanged — it is still 2,252.

Negotiations on joining the ceasefire regime continued with armed opposition groups in Aleppo, Damascus, Hama, Homs and Qunaytirah Governorates.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence on the status of implementation of the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (17 October 2017)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported 10 incidents of gunfire in the following governorates: 6 in Aleppo, 2 in Damascus and 2 in Hama.

The Turkish representative office has not reported any violations.

Most of the incidents of small arms being fired indiscriminately have been reported in areas controlled by fighters of the terrorist groups Nusra Front and ISIL.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours, the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has not carried out any humanitarian operations.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to 82 residents.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 59,999 residents.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

Over the past 24 hours, no ceasefire agreements have been signed with populated areas.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is unchanged — it is still 2,252.

Negotiations on joining the ceasefire regime continued with armed opposition groups in Aleppo, Damascus, Hama, Homs and Qunaytirah Governorates.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

**Security Council**

Distr.: General
23 October 2017

Original: English

Letter dated 18 October 2017 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith a document of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities, presenting its position on the recommendations contained in the twentieth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team established pursuant to resolution 1526 (2004) (S/2017/573), which was submitted to the Committee in accordance with paragraph (a) of annex I to resolution 2253 (2015).

I would be grateful if the present letter and the position paper could be brought to the attention of the members of the Security Council and issued as a document of the Council.

(Signed) Kairat Umarov
Chair

Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999),
1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq
and the Levant (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals,
groups, undertakings and entities



Recommendations of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team contained in its twentieth report

1. On 30 June 2017, the twentieth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team pursuant to paragraph (a) of annex I to Security Council resolution 2253 (2015) (S/2017/573) was submitted to the Committee. A table of recommendations based on the report was also circulated to the Committee on 7 July 2017; the Committee deliberated on the table of recommendations in informal consultations on 7 August 2017. The Committee would like to express its gratitude to the Monitoring Team for the exemplary work undertaken in the fulfilment of its mandate.
2. Since December 2005, when it established the practice, the Committee has responded to each of the reports submitted to it by the Monitoring Team and brought to the attention of the Security Council and the public the Committee's position on the recommendations contained in those reports.

Position of the Committee on the recommendations contained in the twentieth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team

<i>Recommendation to the Committee</i>	<i>Position of the Committee</i>
Impact assessment	
1. Given that a significant number of items illegally removed from Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic have been seized by Member States over the past 12 months and in the light of paragraph 10 of resolution 2347 (2017), the Monitoring Team recommends that the Committee write to Member States, encouraging those that have seized smuggled antiquities and cultural artefacts directly or indirectly connected to the financing of ISIL to propose the relevant facilitators of such trade for listing under the ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida sanctions regime.	The Committee agreed that the Chair would write to Member States to encourage those that have seized smuggled antiquities and cultural artefacts directly or indirectly connected to the financing of ISIL to propose the relevant facilitators of such trade for listing under the ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida sanctions regime.
2. The Monitoring Team recommends that the Committee write to Member States to alert them to the relocater issue and to encourage those that have not yet done so, in accordance with their national laws and regulations, to engage with their relevant domestic authorities and private sector players, including financial institutions, in order to raise awareness of foreign terrorist fighters transferring to a third country rather than returning to their country of nationality or staying within the conflict zones.	The Committee agreed that the Chair would write to Member States to alert them to the relocater issue and to encourage those that have not yet done so, in accordance with their national laws and regulations, to engage with their relevant domestic authorities and private sector players, including financial institutions, in order to raise awareness that foreign terrorist fighters transferring to a third country rather than returning to their country of nationality or staying within the conflict zones.

*Recommendation to the Committee**Position of the Committee*

3. The Monitoring Team recommends that the Committee write to Member States to encourage those that have not yet done so, in accordance with their national laws and regulations, to nominate a focal point for the issue of foreign terrorist fighters and returnees in order to facilitate the exchange of relevant information among Member States. These new focal points could be modelled on the existing focal points for sanctions in Member States.

The Committee agreed that the Chair would write to Member States to encourage those that have not yet done so, in accordance with their national laws and regulations, to nominate a focal point for foreign terrorist fighters and returnees in order to facilitate the exchange of relevant information among Member States. Such focal points could also build on or form part of pre-existing coordination structures on foreign terrorist fighters.

The Committee also agreed that the Chair would encourage Member States to communicate the contact details of the focal point(s) to other Member States and/or the Committee.

Asset freeze

4. The Monitoring Team recommends that the Committee write to Member States asking those that have not yet done so to raise awareness among customs agencies about their crucial role in preventing the direct or indirect provisions of goods to, and in freezing goods controlled directly or indirectly by, listed entities and individuals.

The Committee agreed that the Chair would write to Member States asking those that have not yet done so to raise awareness among customs agencies about their crucial role in preventing the direct or indirect provisions of goods to, and in freezing goods controlled directly or indirectly by, listed entities and individuals.

5. The Monitoring Team recommends that the Committee write to Member States to encourage those that have not yet done so, in accordance with their national laws and regulations, to explore measures, such as creating a dedicated intelligence unit, to enhance the sharing of information between customs agencies and relevant law enforcement, intelligence and security agencies.

The Committee agreed that the Chair would write to Member States to encourage those that have not yet done so, in accordance with their national laws and regulations, to explore measures, such as creating a dedicated intelligence unit, to enhance the sharing of information between customs agencies and relevant law enforcement, intelligence and security agencies.

6. The Monitoring Team recommends that the Committee write to Member States to encourage those that have not yet done so to participate in, or fund, the Global Container Control Programme of the World Customs Organization and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

The Committee agreed that the Chair would write to Member States to encourage those that have not yet done so to participate in, or fund, the Global Container Control Programme of the World Customs Organization and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

7. The Monitoring Team recommends that the Committee write to Member States to highlight that ransom payments remain one of the main methods for listed terrorist groups to obtain funding and remind them that paying ransoms to listed groups violates the ISIL (Da'esh) and Al-Qaida sanctions regime, regardless of how or by whom the ransom is paid.

This recommendation was not agreed by the Committee.

Travel ban

8. The Monitoring Team recommends that the Committee write to Member States to highlight the ability of the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) to automatically match pictures and fingerprints and encourage those that have not yet done so, in accordance with their national laws and regulations, to include biometric data when submitting information on individuals flagged as foreign terrorist fighters to be included in the INTERPOL database.

The Committee agreed that the Chair would write to Member States to highlight the ability of INTERPOL to automatically match pictures and fingerprints and encourage those that have not yet done so, in accordance with their national laws and regulations, to include biometric data when submitting information on individuals flagged as foreign terrorist fighters to be included in the INTERPOL database.

Arms embargo

9. The Monitoring Team recommends that the Committee write to all Member States to highlight this trend and the risk that the use of drones may spill over into other conflict zones and to encourage those that have not yet done so, in accordance with their national laws and regulations, to highlight this risk to their relevant business stakeholders in the field and encourage the exercise of enhanced due diligence when exporting such devices to conflict zones in which ISIL- and Al-Qaida-affiliated groups operate, in particular in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic.

The Committee agreed that the Chair would write to Member States to highlight the risk of use of weaponized drones by ISIL in conflict zones in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic and to encourage those that have not yet done so, in accordance with their national laws and regulations, to raise the awareness of their relevant business stakeholders in the field and encourage the exercise of enhanced due diligence when exporting such devices to conflict zones in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic in which ISIL- and Al-Qaida-affiliated groups operate.

Sanctions list (addressed to the Secretariat)

10. The Team recommends that the Committee request the Secretariat, after briefing the Committee on the features of the enhanced data model and the next steps required to ensure a smooth transition from the current model, to take measures to promote the enhanced data model for use by the relevant Member State authorities and by end users in the financial, civil aviation and other relevant sectors.

The Committee agreed that the Chair would invite the Secretariat to brief the Committee on the features of the enhanced data model and the next steps required to ensure a smooth transition from the current model. The Committee also agreed that, subsequently, the Secretariat is to take measures to promote the enhanced data model for use by the relevant Member State authorities and by end users in the financial, civil aviation and other relevant sectors.